VISIT…

WHAT CINEMA IS!

DUDLEY ANDREW

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Bazin's *Quest* and its Charge

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To David Bromwich and Francesco Casetti

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix
Prologue: The Target of Film Theory xiii

1 The Camera Searching in the World 1

Is a Camera Essential? 1
The *Cahiers* Axiom 4
Tracing Bazin's Trace 11
Images Contested Today 17

2 The Editor's Discovery of Form 29

Bazin's Forerunners 31
Documentaries in the Cauldron of History 37
The *Cahiers* Line 42
Pursuing Cinema in the Twenty-First Century 48

3 The Projector as Spectator's Searchlight 66

The Power of Projection 69
Opening the Screen's Dimensions 74
Frame as Threshold 79
Writing out of the Frame 90

4 The Evolution of the Subjects of Cinema 98

Modern Film: Between Classic and Avant-Garde 99
The Ontogeny of Cinema 110
Credits and Auteurs: An Ecology of Adaptation 123
Fidelity: The Economy of Adaptation 129

Index 147

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I was invited to pre-test some of these ideas at several institutions. Let me single out memorable discussions at Pittsburgh with Colin MacCabe, at Stanford with Scott Bukatman and Pavle Levi, at Concordia with Martin Lefebvre, at Vanderbilt with Sam Gurgis, and at Cambridge with David Trotter.

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Dudley Andrew

Prologue

THE TARGET OF FILM THEORY

The essence of a thing never appears at the outset but in the middle, in the course of its development, when its strength is assured.

—G. Deleuze, *Cinema I*[1]

What is Cinema? Let Me Show You!

Such is the haughty charge of this "manifesto," a charge I'd love to execute with a plethora of examples. After all, Bazin's quest took the form of 2,600 articles that "reviewed," in the full sense of that term, about a huge number of movies of all sorts. But this book has another mission, so that even were there space enough I'd still not hold up many movies, since not any title pulled from the teeming thousands that flow through projectors every year will do; not every roll of photographed celluloid belongs to the category "cinema" as it makes sense to me to define it.

Naturally, it is all a matter of definition. So let me be forthright: the cinema came into its own around 1910 and it began to doubt its constitution sometime in the late 1980s. I'm not the one to send out this tardy birth-announcement; Edgar Morin did that

in 1956 in *Cinema: Or the Imaginary Man* when he headed a chapter "Metamorphosis of the Cinematographe into Cinema."[2] Morin was actually expanding on André Malraux' intuition in his 1940 "Sketch for a Psychology of Cinema" that effectively distinguished the *presentational* attractions produced by the Lumière's invention from the *representations* constructed through an articulation of shots that involve the spectator but seem independent of him or her.[3] In 1983, Gilles Deleuze would apologize for Henri Bergson's 1908 dismissal of the apparatus by insisting that the philosopher had considered only the *cinématographe* and had not yet felt the difference of cinema, which soon emerged as a complete mutation.[4] Deleuze fashioned his astounding catalogue of types of films, making gargantuan claims for the art's prowess, just when digital processes were first imported into studio production practices and when videotapes had begun to alter distribution and exhibition. After Deleuze, another mutation, grossly labeled "new media," has put the cinema's vaunted regency in question, to say the least.

Traditional film studies is indeed on the defensive, for the "idea of cinema" is changing underneath us. Young scholars, hedging their bets on the future, compile bibliographies concerning "The Decay and Death of Cinema"; they draw lessons from Siegfried Zielinski's sassily titled *Audiovisions: Cinema and Television as Entr'actes in History*.[5] Might cinema have already undergone an irremediable transformation, being so sensitive to changes in technology and culture (more so than, say, the novel)? Even were this the case, I take cinema to be privileged within the spectrum of audiovisual phenomena. This preamble aims to clear some of the clutter of ideas left in the wake of the digital tidal wave. Then I can sketch a film aesthetic that owes nothing to the digital, though it can coexist with and profit from new technologies. In fact, the digital is not really in question in this book so much as the "discourse of the digital," some of which would arrogantly de-center or surpass mere cinema.

I do not mean to alienate devotees of post-film or of pre-cinema, by urging that we grasp what cinema thought of itself when its identity and prowess went unquestioned, when it

achieved, and then expanded upon, a mature sense of its place and possibilities. One can reference and enjoy the distinctiveness of the vast variety of forms going under the names "early cinema" and "new media," while nevertheless tightening down on what the cinema became in its heyday and, as I will argue, remains. So, displaying neither nostalgia nor retreat, let's keep the standard canon in sight, the bull's-eye of a target made up of a series of concentric rings. The movies that developed a solid shape after World War I, and reigned for 70 years as the world's most popular and vibrant artform, boldly stand out to be viewed and reviewed. What other candidate might Zielinski identify as an "entr'acte in history" except the broad-shouldered feature that, in his view, has stood too long in the doorway, blocking other media? What else do critics have in mind when they say the cinema is in decay except feature films as we have known and studied them?

Of course there have been other types of films exemplifying "ideas of cinema" different from this dominant one. What shall we call the products of the medium's first decade, when the word "inventor" applied not just to those filing patents but to the artisans who turned out films and the entrepreneurs who funded them and found (or built) audiences? However named, the medium developed in relation to journalistic, entertainment, scientific, and even spiritual practices, each of which affected nascent filmmaking and viewing in its own way. "The Cinema of Attractions" identifies an idea of cinema hovering over this period. It includes and organizes certain uses of technology, certain practices of filmmakers and exhibitors, not to mention the habits and dispositions of spectators apparent in accounts provided by reporters and cultural commentators; it even, indeed especially, includes protocols and laws established to regulate this new phenomenon.

Since it was advanced in the mid-1980s, "The Cinema of Attractions" has become a powerful and distinct idea of cinema. For better and for worse, the splendid variety embraced by this particular idea was gradually replaced by, or channeled into, a normalized fictional mode and then into the "Classic (or Studio) System,"

an idea applying not just to an integrated industry of entertainment, but to a conception of that industry's polished product, the feature film. Whether coming out of one of the eight Hollywood studios or produced anywhere in the world after the fashion of the "movies as usual," classic cinema dominated the interwar years; indeed, it represented the norm long after that (and remains on offer in a good share of the screens at our multiplexes today). But by 1965 anyone deeply interested in cinema recognized the limitations of the classic conception. Even in the 1930s and 1940s plenty of "unusual" films competed with standard fare, often backed by the political or aesthetic ideas of independent producers or institutions of the state. With increasing insistence, they asked: How should films function in society? How should they be made and seen; how should they look and sound? From the 1920s right up to the New Wave, such questions were answered by both brash and discreet alternatives that veered away from a norm whose presence nonetheless was felt to be dominant, if not inevitable.

Throughout the prime era of the studio system, the strongest alternative ideas of cinema, aside from animation, survived in nonnarrative modes: the documentary, the avant-garde, the short subject, as well as in the educational, industrial, and amateur film. All these modes, and the expansive ideas concerning cinema's uses and powers that they put in play, force a comprehensive view of the medium, as they stake out territory we can plot in concentric circles at varying distances from the bull's-eye of the feature. Here we follow André Bazin, who may have been impressed by "the genius of the system" and who wrote copiously on Chaplin, Preston Sturges, and William Wyler, not to mention the western, but who felt equally compelled to promote animation (McLaren), archival compilations (*Paris 1900*), and the bizarre scientific shorts of Jean Painlevé. Still, the institutionalized critical legacy surrounding the feature film has caused the most heated and robust debates in film theory, no doubt because of the social consequences of its ubiquity, its easy crossover to the aesthetics of the novel and theater, as well as its ties to a worldwide entertainment market.

Such debates, whether triggered by ideas coming from within the realm of the fiction film or challenged by modes that circle outside it, have made cinema studies among the liveliest sites in the humanities for the past half-century. The prospect of the decline of those debates is more worrisome than the putative mutation of their topic. For our increasingly seasoned understanding of how the movies have functioned, and how they came to function this way, can guide the study of whatever "audiovisions" attract our attention, whether those that preexisted the movies or those being born this new century. Like the general public, scholars and intellectuals have been drawn to narrative cinema because of its sheer quantitative bulk, because of its psycho-social effects, and because of the ingenious efforts of those who sought to alter its course from within or from without. Many of the best minds in the humanities have taken detours from their literary, philosophical, sociocultural, or historical pursuits to account for the most imposing medium of the twentieth century. They have produced often complex, ingenious, and passionate arguments and positions. They have produced a way of thinking, have cultivated an instinct of looking and listening. Even if much of what has been written could be discarded without real loss, this discourse – this drive to understand the workings of the fiction film – is precious. To have this subsumed by some larger notion of the history of audiovisions, to have it dissipate into the foggy field of cultural studies, say, or become one testing ground among others for communication studies, would be to lose something whose value has always derived from the intensity and the focus that films invite and sometimes demand.

The emergence of the digital encouraged Zielinski and others to lift their sights from standard cinema as the chief target of what has gone under the name of film studies. Indeed, the academic profession appears disoriented, at least momentarily, as questions of new media and of digital processes have sidelined or preempted other theoretical topics in journals and at conferences. A new set of conceptions has arisen at every level, from production to spectatorship. Rather than support or decry millennial proclamations

about the complete transformation of the mediasphere, let's use the occasion of cinema's undeniable digital inflection to rethink the art's past and its potential.

Today's audiences assume that filmmakers completely structure audiovisual experience, encouraging the notion that movies have always been nothing other than a suite of special effects, "the cinema effect," as Sean Cubitt titles his ambitious book.[6] This is the view that Lev Manovich forthrightly proposes; for him, films are instruments that serve two purposes, "To Lie and To Act."[7] Posed this way, cinema articulates perfectly with political and social history, wherein films, as "machines of the visible,"[8] are deployed either to structure pre-designed representations that are inevitably misleading ("biased," we used to say) or to engender direct and calculated viewer response.

I mean to advance quite a different idea of cinema, one that is in accord with the title of neither Cubitt's nor Manovich's texts: cinema is not, or has not always been, a primarily special effects medium. The films some of us most care about – and consider central to the enterprise of cinema *in toto* – have a mission quite other than lying or agitating: they aim to discover, to encounter, to confront, and to reveal. If anything is endangered by the newly digitalized audiovisual culture, it is a taste for the encounters such voyages of discovery can bring about. Apparently, many today feel that the world and the humans who inhabit it have been sufficiently discovered, that no new revelations await, at least not in a medium dominated by entertainment and advertising.

Ironically, it was in the service of advertising that several of the first great voyages of cinematic discovery set off. *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, 1922) was sponsored by a fur company, and *Black Journey* (*La Croisière noire*; Léon Poirier, 1924) by Citroën. As filmmakers always have, Flaherty and Poirier controlled and manipulated their materials for effect, but they did so in a more or less visible contest wherein recorded images and sounds put up a certain resistance, creating an expressive and significant friction that I am determined to register. Edgar Morin insisted on just this: that while all the arts project our dreams and desires,

cinema is unique in doing so through the material world itself, or, more precisely, through a double of that world. Hence all films are uncanny evocations, partly – but only partly – belonging to us. This tension between the human and the alien, between the personal and the foreign, while exploited in all periods and in countless modes and genres, came increasingly into play during and after World War II, right up to the many New Waves of the 1960s, when it is abundantly evident.

Jacques Aumont encourages me to zero in: "1945–1960 is incontestably the richest period from the point of view of the history of ideas about the cinematographic art."[9] I plan, in fact, to dip back somewhat earlier than this and I will certainly carry this era's discoveries through to their consequences in our own day; but Aumont has it right: this postwar period, over which André Bazin exercised his generous rule, deepened cinema's conscience and self-consciousness, while expanding its cultural sway until it stood proudly with the other arts, a resource for philosophers, theorists, sociologists, and anyone concerned with the human situation in modernity.

The idea of cinema best articulated by Bazin applies to all sorts of films, genres, and modes, and in all periods. Still, prime examples that self-consciously display this idea leap to mind, like *Nanook of the North* . . . and like *The 400 Blows* (*Les Quatre cent coups*, 1959), which was dedicated to Bazin. Stepping outside the studio system, indeed stepping outside the studio, *The 400 Blows*, as well as its young hero, is in search of discovery itself. In one emblematic sequence, Antoine Doinel, playing hooky with his "classmate," wanders into an amusement park where he enters a human centrifuge. Incarnating Doinel but being himself, Jean-Pierre Léaud is flattened against the side of the rotor. This boy – not yet an actor – spread-eagled as a spectacle before us, seems pinned and powerless, yet exhibits pure sensation on a ride that spins like a zoetrope as it animates him. A reverse field shot shows the world as he sees it, the camera hugging the wall, turned upside down and whirling at a mighty rate. A dizzy Léaud staggers from the cylinder's doorway, followed by Francois Truffaut, whom we

Pure sensations of a boy. *The 400 Blows.*

glimpse in cameo, the boy's compatriot or big brother, more than his director. In the end, Léaud – this anonymous boy picked out of a pack of others in the summer of 1958 – will be spun from this ride out to the end of the land, where he turns to stare down Truffaut and the spectator in a final freeze frame. The film fades out on the close-up of a kid who got his education on the streets, confronting the world and confronting us. He will not be entirely manipulated by the "director" nor fully known by us.

Let Léaud's 14-year-old face serve as an icon of cinema's ambiguity, a record of our shadowy encounter with a genuine boy playing a role in a story projected onto the Paris of 50 years ago. The freeze frame, the mechanical intermittency of the cylinder, and the director's fugitive appearance, all lift *The 400 Blows* to an abstract level at odds with both the realism of its images (boy and city) and the story it puts in play. This is a film about the prospects of cinema as much as about the prospects of Jean-Pierre Léaud, whose life would never be the same. It is the record of the difficulties and joys of filming as well as the difficulties and the joys of adolescence, the moment when youth separates from parent. In a touching and symbolic coincidence, Bazin died on November 11, 1958, the day shooting on *The 400 Blows* commenced. Truffaut raced to be with his mentor and foster father as he slipped away. A film that has always been read as autobiographical is also a

film about the idea of cinema that Bazin stood for and passed on to the son.

In another self-conscious moment, Léaud and his friend duck into the movies, then return later to the theater and rip from the wall an advertising still of the alluring Harriet Andersson, playing Monika in Ingmar Bergman's *Summer with Monika* (*Sommaren med Monika*, 1953). For Truffaut and all the critics clustering around *Cahiers du cinéma* in its first years, Monika was an icon of liberated sexuality, and Bergman of liberated filmmaking. Drawn to the same film, Godard said that Bazin had taught him how to catch, and then fathom, the exquisite complicity between actress and spectator unavailable in classic cinema. Harriet Andersson slyly nods to us, like Giulietta Masina at the end of *The Nights of Cabiria* (*Le Notti di Cabiria*; Fellini, 1957) and, let me add, like Jean-Paul Belmondo early on in *Breathless* (*A Bout de souffle*, Godard, 1960).

Bazin evidently approved of the adolescent fantasy of performer coming out of role, almost leaving the screen, to interact directly with adoring spectator. But let's not too quickly disparage adolescence, a period of questioning and self-consciousness. Bazin and Godard understood the actor to be both person and character, alive not just inside the fictional world but as a human being present to the spectator. Self-consciousness does not undercut fiction (at least not necessarily), but allows us to see the spark that jumps from the world to the work. "To reinvent the cinema," "to film as

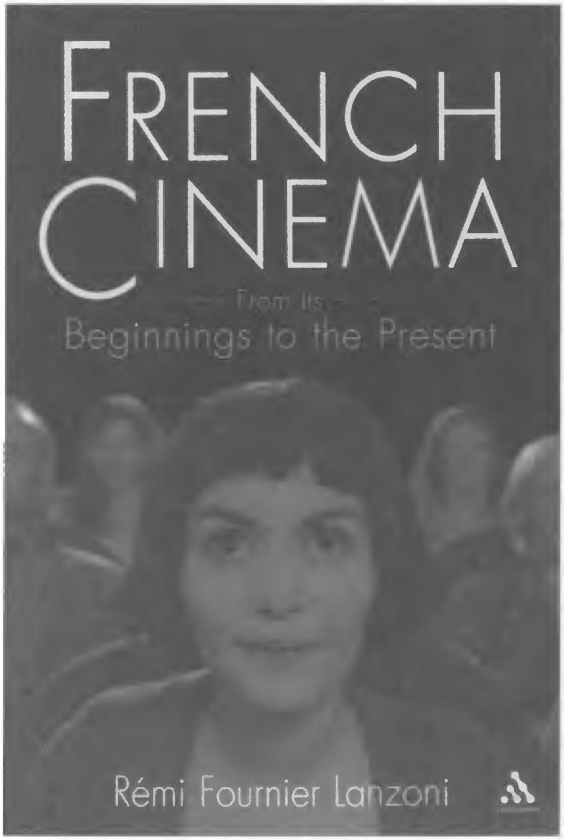
An actress comes out of role. *The Nights of Cabiria.*

if for the first time": such a mantra could be recited only by those who knew the history of the cinema by heart, and the New Wave directors, who were schooled at the Cinémathèque française, proudly constituted themselves as the first generation to possess such knowledge. Self-consciousness was taken paradoxically to be a condition for the re-enchantment of cinema.

Léaud's unpredictability, his saucy ingenuity, expresses the cinémania alive at *Cahiers*. This attitude, let us call it an ethic, has been thought to characterize French cinema *in toto*, so

A searching cinema.

much so that the famous frozen frame of *The 400 Blows* stares out from the cover of the standard history of that national cinema.[10] As Alan Williams, the author of that history, explicitly understood, adolescence is a period of maturation as well as of rebellion and libido. The exuberance of the New Wave shows off the growth spurt the medium had experienced in its enlarged self-conception after World War II. For the camera began to stray outside familiar territory and to confront an often shocking world; it strayed, as adolescents do, from



An enticing cinema.

entrenched norms, from the *cinéma du papa* that had shielded French youth from real sex, real death, real history. Meeting Monika's gaze in the theater, then audaciously stealing her image, taking it home to fetishize it, may seem a puerile gesture; but it is a gesture of encounter whose value can lead to discovery and sometimes to confrontation. This is the value whose line of flight forms the arc of this book.

* * *

While this arc aims to involve cinema at all times and everywhere, for convenience and clarity I make it pass mainly over France, the noisiest forum for debate of competing ideas of cinema, the nation with the most film journals, the widest spectrum of films on offer, and arguably the deepest penetration of the art into the culture at large. Also for convenience and clarity I draw on ripe examples, such as – repeatedly – *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* (Jeunet, 2001). How can I avoid Amélie, whose winsome face adorns the cover of an up-to-date survey of French film,[11] competing with Alan Williams' in a duel of iconic images. *Amélie*'s director, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, boasts an updated idea of cinema, explicitly rejecting that of the New Wave, and drawing fire from *Cahiers* in the process. Whereas Truffaut discovered Léaud in a cattle call of street urchins, Jeunet, like thousands of others, spied Audrey Tautou posing on a billboard above the Place Clichy.[12] This simple, though telltale opposition will lead to countless others that altogether deliver not just two very different films, but two competing ideas of cinema that face off today in Paris and around the world.

By idea, I mean an overriding conception that can be felt at every level of the film phenomenon. The decisions made by producers always have some tacit conception at their base; usually this coincides with what audiences understand their experience to be, or what it should be. Modes (fiction, documentary, animation) and genres (science fiction, docu-drama, anime) instantiate an idea of cinema. So too do critics, blogs, and casual conversations among friends as they discuss what they have seen, calling on, if not articulating, the values at stake. James Lastra has shown how,

at the birth of motion pictures and again in the transition to sound, inventors, producers, and critics held ideas that did not quite overlap.[13] The same is doubtless true in our transition to the digital. Still, throughout these transitions, and across the entire history of the medium's existence, cinema has raised (and sometimes pressed) a claim about realism that no other art before it could make. Of all who have ever thought deeply about this claim, Bazin best recognized the way it displaced, or could displace, human domination of the natural and social world we inhabit, the world ostensible in movies. The strategies he is famous for promoting, such as long take, deep-focus photography, and the values promised by such techniques and styles (revelation of the overlooked, ambiguity, the uncanny) do not exhaust what this idea makes possible. Every era finds its cinema already caught in a network of particular technologies, techniques, styles, and genres; Bazin's idea of cinema applies beyond the postwar network. I take seriously one of his most quoted phrases, "In short, the cinema has not yet been invented." To track the way its past leads to its future was Bazin's "quest," concentrated in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* I take this as a "charge" not to be forsaken in an era very different from that of 1958, when Bazin laid it down. Even if the "cinema's existence precedes its essence," so that Bazin would never have credited an answer to his question, or have accepted my deliberately provocative title, we may still say something essential about it. And so let's say this: that in whatever manifestation or period, real cinema has a relation to the real.

* * *

In order to discover, and then to encounter, this forceful idea of cinema, I propose an excursion into a field that has already been staked out and partially cultivated by traditional film theory. Whereas literary criticism can be bisected into ideas about texts on one side and ideas about reading on the other, film theory has tended to break into three areas of inquiry corresponding to the three phases, or moments, of transformation by which any film comes into being: recording, composing, and screening. Each

phase can be associated with its chief dedicated apparatus: the camera, the movieola (editing bench), and the projector. The recent agony of film theory, if not of cinema itself, can be blamed on the modification, updating, or mothballing of each of these pieces of equipment, with twenty-first century digital technology supplanting what is effectively nineteenth century machinery. The digital is thought to perfect whatever operations its analog or manual predecessors were designed to perform; the digital enhances, expands, and alters those operations, achieving ultimate control. Such a technological revolution nudges us to return to cinema's fundamental operations, one phase at a time, to see what remains of the phenomenon of cinema after the sweeping changes of the past two decades.

These operations are interfaces between humans and what is outside them. Each of these three interfaces – named after its filmic apparatus – merits a full chapter of discussion, with current digital pressure put on ideas that matured in the middle of the last century. An additional chapter asserts itself, one dedicated to the primacy of "subject matter," and the special place it holds in film theory and criticism. For if Bazin is right, the cinema has grown into itself – and continues to evolve as itself – through encounters with and adaptations to the world for which it was made. The chief themes of the final chapter, cinema's inherent impurity and its penchant for adaptation, establish the tone for this book's paradoxical mission: to identify the abiding characteristics of a phenomenon that exists only in relation to something beyond it.

Notes

1. Gregory Flaxman opens his introduction to *The Brain is the Screen* with this sentence, taken from the third page of Deleuze's first *Cinema* book. I open my own study with it as a blessing and as an apology for concentrating on the years 1938–68, cinema's middle years, when its strength was most definitely assured and when it came to interrogate what must have appeared to be its destiny.

2. Edgar Morin, *The Cinema, or the Imaginary Man* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), pp. 47–83.
3. André Malraux, "Sketch for a Psychology of Cinema," *Verve*, 8 (1940); anthologized in Suzanne Langer (ed.), *Reflections on Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).
4. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 1–3.
5. Siegfried Zielinski, *Audiovisions: Cinema and Television as Entr'actes in History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999).
6. Sean Cubitt, *The Cinema Effect* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004).
7. Lev Manovich, "To Lie and To Act: Cinema and Telepresence," in Thomas Elsaesser and K. Hoffmann (eds.), *Cinema Futures: Cain, Abel or Cable?: The Screen Arts in the Digital Age* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), pp. 189–99.
8. Jean-Louis Comolli, "Machines of the Visible," in Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism*, 3rd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 741–60.
9. Jacques Aumont, *Le Cinéma et la mise en scène* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2006), p. 73.
10. Alan Williams, *The Republic of Images* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
11. Rémi Fournier Lanzoni, *French Cinema from its Beginnings to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 2002).
12. *Amélie* press kit.
13. James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 13–14.

Chapter 1

THE CAMERA SEARCHING IN THE WORLD

Bad filmmakers have no ideas and good filmmakers have too many, while the greatest have but one. Set firm, it lets them hold the road as they pass through an ever-changing and always interesting landscape. The cost of this is well known: a certain solitude. And what about critics? It would be the same for them, [but all are unworthy]. All except one. Between 1943 and 1958 André Bazin was that one . . . In the postwar French world, Bazin was at once inheritor and precursor, figure de proue et passeur.

—(Serge Daney, *Cahiers du cinéma*, August 1983)

Is a Camera Essential?

Without any recording device whatever, Emile Reynaud projected moving images in his theater in 1889. Drawing and painting directly onto glass plates, he fashioned brief snippets of a dozen plates each. Ultimately, he came up with a way to roll the glass plates onto reels and made three sequences of 500 plates each. Luminously colored, these stand as precious early works of animation. Even after 1895, certain audacious "filmmakers" bypassed

the camera altogether. In the 1920s, Man Ray exposed and developed photographic paper on which he arranged an array of objects. His Rayographs have generally been displayed in museums alongside standard photographs, as if they were made in the same manner. Man Ray's process has been adapted by numerous experimental film artists – notably Stan Brakhage, who glued moths' wings and other matter onto raw film stock, then printed it for his sublime *Mothlight* (1963).

Such wonderful examples of film art stand out so vividly because they are imaginative and rare. They belong to what is aptly called the experimental mode, because they test the very definition and identity of the medium. But they also rely on the standard definition for part of their effect. What would happen to cinema if many, or even all, films dispensed with cameras?[1] In the most technologically advanced films of the twenty-first century, such as *Beowulf* (2007), cameras play only an ancillary role. The screen seldom reflects the visual information that light originally carried through a camera lens; rather, what we see is the artifact of computer rearrangements of a number of contributing visual elements, only some of which begin with cinematography. The computer lays out a comprehensible view that may be further elaborated through virtual imaging. Thus a single long-take view (never actually shot by a single camera) becomes a master shot that orients successive views derived from it via geometrical realignments. The "scene" can be explored as if a camera has moved in for close-ups, or has cut to a 90-degree view, or has craned up and around in a spiral motion – yet all without a camera. The virtual reality installations that one encounters in museums or theme parks, as well as most video games, likewise employ cameras mainly as assists in the first stage of their production. In audiovisual entertainment, cameras are at best conveniences, potentially dispensable as computer technology improves.

Cel animation has always amounted to a camera-less cinema anyway. Designed on two-dimensional surfaces, thousands of pictures are then manipulated and sequenced to appear alive and moving in three-dimensional space when presented full-speed on

screen. This is one reason, though not the most essential, that Sean Cubitt has declared all cinema to be fundamentally a version of animation, rather than the reverse.[2] If until recently cameras were required for the fabrication of animated as well as standard films, it was merely to conveniently render the artist's handiwork on celluloid for projection. Today, monitors display animation that has been designed directly on the computer, obviating cameras. Might all cinema someday follow? Cubitt's is among the most intelligent of the many provocative declarations instigated by the digital that are meant to utterly transform the theoretical landscape.

And indeed traditional theorists, realizing that moving pictures may be generated without a physical imprint, have experienced their foreboding escalate into panic. Does not cinema require a source or referent in the world? And even if captured by a (digital) camera, motion pictures can now be manipulated at will, as in animation. Yet the documentary has never been more in the forefront of discussion, as questions about the trace, visual memory, and authenticity – often alluding to André Bazin – have returned with real force. Philip Rosen and Thomas Elsaesser, for example, have deflated the apocalyptic rhetoric that accompanied the first digital cameras, arguing that in the main they serve the same function as did their analogue predecessors, to record the world set before them.[3] As they generally have done in the past, internal cues or paratextual guarantees about the source of their images accompany most documentaries shot in digital, alerting the public as to their reliability. The aberrant genre called the mockumentary relies on the rule that it flaunts.

For the public has generally retained its credence in moving pictures. And why not? Countless parents purchase cameras to document the birth or birthdays of their children in home movies whose mode is far from animation. The camera is not only indispensable for domestic life, but the very fetish of family identity and solidarity. Reality TV names an entertainment obsession that is equally dependent on the camera. Far more than in the days of celluloid, today's cities are monitored by cameras. As the Rodney King beating made so vivid, the camera's purview has expanded,

for democratization makes potential reporters of the world's entire population. Newsflashes broadcast the face of a robber caught in more-or-less distinguishable images by a hidden camera that some agency thought to install. Courts of law have had to reassess the status of audiovisual evidence because of such increase in the sources of visual evidence, and because, being manipulatable, it is suspect.[4] The camera, it seems, ranks today as far more than a vestige of a fading cinema culture.

Fiction filmmakers quickly understood and have exploited the force of the digital camera. Werner Herzog's *Grizzly Man* (2005) effectively embeds a digital record as primary data deep inside its celluloid inquiry into the life of its subject, an obsessive naturalist and amateur cameraman, eaten by a bear he loved to photograph.[5] In *Ring* (*Ringu*, 1998), a videocassette spreads death to those who watch it. In these and many other examples, images from amateur camcorders vie with those shot on professional formats, representing two different ontological levels. Curiously, the electronic image almost always connotes a primal level of reality to which the celluloid fiction must adjust. Yes, "the ontology of the photographic image" has come center stage again, as the relevance of this ontology and the questions associated with cinema's recording phase become increasingly acute.

The *Cahiers* Axiom

Let's draw the line at camera-less animation. Indeed, let's draw the line that separates one conception of cinema from another. What I call "the *Cahiers* line" amounts to the genealogy of an "idea of cinema" that preceded and now coexists with this "cinema as animated storyboard," which is how I would characterize much of today's audiovisual entertainment. Taking flight from that journal's founder, André Bazin, the notorious gang of *Cahiers du cinéma* critics (Truffaut, Rivette, Rohmer, Chabrol, and Godard) passed this idea on to Serge Daney, Bazin's most illustrious successor, right up to Jean-Michel Frodon, its editor during the period in

which I've been writing this book. It's an idea embodied in the films of Rossellini and through him of the New Wave auteurs, four of them still working; it continues to inspire directors (like Arnaud Desplechin and Olivier Assayas in France, and like Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Abbas Kiarastami, Lars von Trier, Jia Zhang-ke, and many others around the world). This idea is based, Daney once claimed, on an axiom; so let's start with that: "L'Axiome *Cahiers*: c'est que le cinema a rapport au réel et que le réel n'est pas le représenté—et basta."[6] ("The *Cahiers* axiom is this: that the cinema has a fundamental rapport with reality and that the real is not what is represented – and that's final.") Daney hurled this axiom in the face of the so-called "Cinéma du Look" of the 1980s, those winsome confections like *Diva* (1981) and *Subway* (1985) that came from the advertising industry, and would lead to *Amélie* (*Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*, 2001). I throw it against an overconfident discourse of the digital.

The anxiety produced by the possibility of complete directorial control over the image and the spectator spurred proponents of realism like Annette Kuhn and Jean-Pierre Geuens, as well the Dogme 95 filmmakers, to deploy Bazin's concepts in a defensive action to hold the wavering line against an onslaught of a swaggering post-filmic cinema that boasts of concocting images and manipulating both them and audiences at will. Against the all-powerful computer, traditionalists hold up the camera as a unique device that captures the visual configuration of a given moment, perhaps revealing its truth. This is the epiphanic view of cinema with which Bazin has always, but not quite accurately, been associated.

Geuens makes perhaps the strongest case for retaining this view today when he decries the way that the digital has shifted attention from shooting to postproduction.[7] When a director in classical filmmaking yelled "Quiet on the set!" he subtracted everything inessential so as to isolate the sacred place and holy moment of creativity, to be permanently fixed on celluloid. Actors gave all they could, sometimes again and again until it came off well, while the camera and sound crew silently moved in exquisite

choreography to let the atmosphere of the set (in studio or on location) infuse the image while registering the minutest inflections of the performances, the significant moment when, whether rehearsed or inadvertent, a smile turns awkward or an eyelid flutters. Today, sets are noisy and a single bumbling take can become the basis of the final scene, rectified either by editing within the frames themselves (altering a faulty gesture, erasing a blemish) or by piecing the whole together out of fragments of takes to arrive at something that never really occurred. In the most expensive of today's productions, shooting actors against green-screens often replaces their face-to-face interplay and their bodily response to the mise en scène. Cinema magic still exists – this is what draws millions to the theater – but its source is no longer on the set and in the moment when the camera registered something unrepeatable. The magic has migrated to the computer, where soundtracks are additive concoctions of scores of tracks, and pictures are composited, not composed.

The argument for traditional, photographic cinema was actually put forth in a movie sequence, dead center in Richard Linklater's *Waking Life* (2001), ironically a work classified as animation. From a helicopter overview, the "camera" weaves its way downward to join the film's main character, who approaches a movie theater with a marquee announcing the title of the sequence: "The Holy Moment." As the character looks on from a theater seat, a garrulous intellectual (voiced and scripted by Caveh Zahedi) holds forth on the screen within the screen about André Bazin's mystical worldview. Only the camera, Zahedi intimates, can bring us back to the full reality that we are surrounded by but generally ignore, reduced to our myopic personal projects. The camera can put us in touch with the everyday world of appearances and with a temporality of singular moments so rich that they mock the frenetic pace that our schemes demand of us. This amounts to a common enough view of Bazin's ideas, to a simplified "Bazinism,"[8] and Linklater must know it, for he undercuts the clichés by having them professed in rapid-fire monologue by a hyperactive character clearly full of himself, hardly someone to

whom revelations easily come. Second, Zahedi is scarcely a character at all, but a voice linked to an array of pulsing, wavy lines that outline a human shape; for *Waking Life* is rotoscoped from first to last. While this type of animation may be based on cinematography, it gives the impression of being manipulated, even as Zahedi preaches a "hands off" aesthetic.

Rather than to Bazin, Zahedi's views might better be ascribed to Eric Rohmer, for whom cinema has always been an art of "showing." His early essays, such as "The Classic Age," praise cinema above literature for giving us not the significance of an action but the action's visibility. We see a character (an actor) perform something, and we immediately register its aptness or falsity.[9] No director has exploited more than Rohmer the "epiphany" in Joyce's sense, whether it be the unveiling of a truth of nature [the silence preceding the dawn in *Four Adventures of Reinette and Mirabelle* (*4 Aventures de Reinette et de Mirabelle*, 1987); the color of the setting sun in *The Green Ray* (*Le Rayon vert*), 1986] or the truth of a social situation that a character thought he or she had understood (all six of the moral tales). Rohmer stages not just a drama between characters but one between heavily laden language and limpid images, as in the titular moment of *Claire's Knee* (*Le Genou de Claire*, 1970), when Bernard describes, and tries to assess, the significance of a simple act to which the camera was witness, his touching a girl's knee while they sheltered from a sudden rainstorm. Symptomatically, Rohmer's collected criticism, *The Taste for Beauty*, concludes with a lengthy section on Jean Renoir, who, despite an opposite temperament, stands as his undeniable master. It was alongside Bazin that Rohmer learned to honor the sensual quality of Renoir's shots, the timbre of sounds – always recorded *en direct* – and the irony of character myopia within an expansive and rich world.

But Rohmer's view of Renoir is itself limited, as is his view of Bazin. For Renoir, the world of appearances can often deceive, and in any case does not amount to the truth. Just consider Christine's mistake in spying her husband with his former mistress after the hunt in *The Rules of the Game* (*La Règle du jeu*, 1939). Despite her

Truth and appearance. *Rules of the Game.*

binoculars – indeed, because of this apparatus, one that stands in for the camera – she misunderstands what she sees and brings ruin down upon everyone as a consequence. Bazin holds the same view when, in the "Ontology of the Photographic Image," he writes "The debate between realism in art proceeds under a misunderstanding, under a confusion between aesthetics and psychology, between true realism, the need to give significant expression to the world both concretely and its essence, and the pseudorealism of a deception aimed at fooling the eye (or for that matter the mind); a pseudorealism content in other words with illusory appearances." If appearances can be a pseudorealism in Bazin and Renoir (and in Rohmer, as well), what has become of the epiphany of the natural world rendered by the camera? Rohmer's films are talky for good reason.

Undoubtedly, Bazin expressed a positive view of the unadorned cinematic image. You can see this across many of his essays; yet he sides with directors who "put their faith" not in the image but in reality,[10] and in case after case he demonstrates that the reality attained by a film is what precisely is not visible in its images. This is the Bazin for whom the screen is the photographic negative of reality, something essential but preliminary to the reality sought by the director. This "shadowy Bazin," let's call him, reentered serious film discussion thanks to Gilles Deleuze and Serge Daney, both of whom recognized his affinity with a philosophy of the virtual that has become the order of the day. Deleuze never hid his debt to the *Cahiers* line and explicitly to Bazin, as he

developed his theory of the virtual image in *L'Image-temps*. Daney reconverted to Bazin in the 1980s, just after he left *Cahiers* and began assessing the televisual society he found himself commenting on for the newspaper *Libération*. He wrote: "Bazin's vision of cinema—ineradicably tied to the idea of cinema as 'prise de vue'—is confronted today with a state of cinema where the image is not necessarily taken from the real. The electronic image ignores the (mirror's) silver. Paradoxically, it is just because of this that he remains essential."[11]

So let's go back to that *Cahiers* axiom: "cinema has a rapport with the real and yet the real is not the represented." Daney in fact adapted this axiom from Rohmer, whose eulogy for Bazin in the January 1959 issue of *Cahiers* stated frankly that in Bazin's collected writings "Each article, but also his entire ouevre, has the rigor of a real mathematical proof. All of Bazin's work is centered on one idea, the affirmation of cinematic 'objectivity,' in the same way that geometry centers on the properties of the straight line." Daney goes beyond Rohmer's Euclidian view when he implies that Bazin's understanding of cinema may be closer to a calculus where negative as well as imaginary values come into play and where approximation (the asymptote) is as close as one can get to objectivity. Bazin, he was among the first to recognize, is at least in great part a theorist of absence for whom the clear Sartrean categories of presence and absence give way to intermediate concepts with names like "trace," "fissure," and "deferral." Remember, Bazin claimed that photographic portraits don't represent their subjects; rather, they are "grey or sepia shadows, phantomlike . . . the disturbing presence of lives halted at a set moment in their duration."[12] Cinema confronts us with something resistant, to be sure, but not necessarily with the solid body of the world. Through cinema, the world "appears"; that is, it takes on the qualities and status of an "apparition."

Apparitions are exactly what Bazin takes up in "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," considered by some the most influential essay ever written on film, a word it scarcely mentions. Imagine founding a film theory not only on the photograph but on the

spectral! The spectral reappears often in Bazin's oeuvre, even in throwaway reviews of minor films. In a fugitive review of a couple of unimportant titles, he put his finger on a certain intangible value he sensed in them, finding that "like a cannon whose hollow bore is surrounded by bronze," certain films are defined by the emptiness at their center. In French, the cannon's bore is known as its "*ame*" or soul; thus, by analogy, the core of certain films can best be defined by the material around it, what is apparent on the screen portending an invisible spirit.[13] For Bazin, the empty center of visual representation is the evacuated soul of the mummy, the figure with which Bazin begins his great essay: "At the origin of painting and sculpture there lies a mummy complex . . ." Encased in bandages, wound around it like meters of film,[14] the mummy is laid deep inside a hollow pyramid, protected by a labyrinth (let's call them plot lines) from grave-robbers (let's call these critics). For years it has been said that Bazin's naïve realism took the visible to be the real, the epiphanic image reached after solving or dissolving the maze of narrative; whereas it was ever the soul of the mummy that he sought through what appears on the screen. No wonder Bazin became the staunchest defender of Rossellini's *Voyage to Italy* (*Viaggio in Italia*, 1953). In its climactic scene, plaster casts of two bodies being excavated in Pompeii gradually appear to address (and accuse) Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders. Thus does the emptiness at the core of cinema call up the fullness of a moral world that addresses us.

Epiphany of the empty core. *Voyage to Italy.*

Bazin's eleven-page "Ontology" essay is the most substantial of the two score pieces he penned during the Occupation. Next to the mimeographed cine-club tracts and the reviews in newspapers that were effectively broadsides, the "Ontology" essay was very different, prepared with great care for a special edition of the prestigious journal *Confluences*, called *Problèmes de la peinture*. Rather than the youthful energy of most of his early writing – just what one might expect from a 25-year-old enthusiast – one finds instead a morbidity in the essay on photography. And in fact the publication of this piece involved death and deferral, for the Milice raided the press in Lyon that was to have brought it out in May 1944; they executed the publisher, bringing about a delay of over a year in its appearance.[15] I date the conception of the essay's central thesis about the photographic trace to early 1944, since it exhibits a brilliant leap when compared to his rather academic piece of November 1943, "Pour une esthétique réaliste." Perhaps the atmosphere of the Occupation took hold of him, with its deceptive veneer of calm, its whisperings and secret codes, its Resistance and disappearances. Incubating in cold rooms after curfew, the "Ontology" essay was written by an impoverished renegade, a failed academic, fascinated by existential phenomenology. But let us discard biography for philology so as to develop (in the photographic sense) the basis of this essay, which itself lies at the foundation of cinematic modernism.

Tracing Bazin's Trace

At the ciné-club he ran within the Maison des Lettres near the Sorbonne, Bazin was occasionally thrilled to see Jean-Paul Sartre show up. Did he and Bazin engage each other? A few years hence the two would spar over *Citizen Kane* (1941), with Sartre generously publishing Bazin's rebuke to him in *Les Temps modernes*.[16] But in 1943 the young Bazin must have been content just to have Sartre lend his prestige to his fledgling club. This was the year of *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*;

but it was Sartre's previous work, his superb essay on Faulkner and particularly the 1940 *L'Imaginaire*,[17] that can be felt in Bazin's slowly germinating essay, since at issue is a phenomenology of images that derive from painting and photography. *L'Imaginaire* can be felt throughout the "Ontology" essay. It would also help Roland Barthes germinate *Camera Lucida,* a book explicitly dedicated to *L'Imaginaire.* Indeed, Bazin's "Ontology" mediates between Sartre and Barthes. Barthes, always niggardly in his references, cites him but once, yet it is dead center in *Camera Lucida.* We feel Sartre in Bazin and Bazin in Barthes. So passes the ghostly afterlife of textual presence.[18]

That ghost appeared to me as I prepared the "Forewords" to the two reissued volumes of *What is Cinema?* I looked closely into Bazin's personal copy of *L'Imaginaire*, which his widow had given me as a souvenir. Examining it page by page (except for those pages – very important – that he did not read: I know because they are uncut), I found his penciled underlinings, and some marginalia. Bazin seems to have bought this book right away, in its first year, 1940. Several of its phrases and examples crop up in the "Ontology" essay. Bazin's bold assertion, "by its very genesis photography derives from the ontology of the model: it *is* the model,"[19] echoes Sartre, who begins a section of his book this way: "Through the photo of Pierre I envision Pierre . . . [the photo] acts upon us—almost—like Pierre in person. I say 'This is a portrait of Pierre' or, more briefly, 'this is Pierre.'"[20] (Bazin marked this section up thoroughly.)

In the second paragraph of the "Ontology" essay, one can feel Sartre hovering nearby. Bazin writes of "the arrow-pierced clay bear to be found in prehistoric caves, a substitute for the living animal that will ensure a successful hunt."[21] Sartre had used the same image, "the effigy of wax pierced by a pin, the holy bisons painted on walls to make the hunt fruitful."[22] Bazin underlined this sentence and bracketed the whole passage, which he then reworked, for his own different purpose. I know Bazin fought this book, for there in his copy of *L'Imaginaire*, folded neatly at page 38, I discovered my own mummy, a sheet of notes that Bazin

carefully typed and headed: "Photographie; 'représentant analogique'; 'analogon' (Sartre)." Bazin begins his notes accepting Sartre's distinction between the photograph as a transparent *nothing*, a vehicle rendering the analogon of its object directly to consciousness, versus the photograph as a black and white *something*, whose material features (marks of lighting, shade) cause us to see it momentarily as an object like any other, like a carpet or piece of wallpaper. Neither Bazin nor Sartre cares about the photograph as object; the analogon is what interests them both, but the analogon points in two different directions and these men diverge in how they discuss it. Sartre lifts it instantly toward the imagination, where it triggers associations in a manner distinct from other types of image-consciousness. Bazin goes in the other direction, toward the photo's source, characterizing how the photo's analagon leads us back down to the world from which it was ripped. For Sartre, the photograph quickly fades into absence to the extent that it succeeds in getting us to attend to the analogon, which in turn is consumed by the freewheeling imagination where memory, emotion, and other images come into play. Bazin, less interested in the freedom of the imagination, focuses on the power of the photograph to amplify our perception, "teaching us" what our eyes alone would not have noticed. Photography extends what Sartre calls the *apprenticeship of seeing*, something he denied the mental image. Our imaginations, Bazin argues, can grasp at the reality that the photograph hints at. Take, for instance, the inadequate pictures shot during a moment of crisis or danger. In such cases the photograph may show us very little, but it functions all the same, as "the negative imprint" of the "adventure chiseled deep."[23] The cameraman could film nothing further of an event whose impact we feel all the stronger because of the shaky image and the ellipses. Horror films have learned to produce the effect of such uncertain images.

Bazin's page of notes offers a cleverly chosen example of a photograph: the oven of Landru – Bluebeard. This notorious object had in fact been lifted by the police in 1921 from its actual context, Landru's basement, to be dropped into the courtroom where

it testified for the prosecution. Now, two decades later, the photograph featuring this object has become a document in another case, a philosophical one. Thus the oven is doubly displaced from the context that it has been singled out to conjure up (those moments in the basement – ten, to be gruesomely precise – when it was allegedly fired up to dispose of female victims). Bazin terms the photograph a *document*, an intrusion from elsewhere that serves notice on the present, putting the freedom of imagination in perspective. Here Bazin is far closer to Breton, Dalí, Bataille, and Benjamin than to Sartre. In 1943 his friends called Bazin a practicing Surrealist,[24] and Georges Bataille would publish Bazin's "Myth of Total Cinema" in 1946.[25] As for Benjamin, Bazin never mentions him, but he must have been intrigued by Malraux' footnote to Benjamin in the 1940 "Sketch for a Psychology of the Cinema,"[26] an essay Bazin knew by heart and cites early in his "Ontology" piece. Indeed, Bazin's own final footnote in his original 1945 version elaborates Benjamin's famous ideas (without mentioning him) about paintings being overtaken by their photographed reproductions. Both men assiduously studied Baudelaire, that harbinger of modern, alienated self-consciousness. Both applauded what Baudelaire feared: the decline in importance of artistic genius under the avalanche of technological mass society. Both men registered, for instance, the shock that photographs from the past could administer to the present.[27] Just as Bazin sought out films that brought to the screen phenomena that art was incapable of fully digesting, Benjamin culled discarded documents and other detritus of civilization to challenge the smooth "official stories" that novelists, historians, and of course politicians spin. Sensing himself an outsider, Benjamin was attracted to technologies like cinema and to avant-garde movements like Surrealism because they ignored or undermined classical culture. He took Breton's *Nadja* to be crucial, because it relied on chance to raise neglected, forgotten, or invisible places and objects into view.[28] Breton lodged photographs within the body of his novel, alien images of disturbing objects that, out of the blue or out of the night, interrupt his own prose and vision.

Landru's oven is this type of photograph, whose voltage, accumulated within the situation that originally charged it, could flash up in lightning to shock the viewer with an inhuman power.[29] The final page of the "Ontology" essay demonstrates Bazin's allegiance: "For the surrealist, the logical distinction between the imaginary and the real was eliminated. Every image should be experienced as an object and every object as an image. Photography was thus a privileged technology for surrealist practice because it produces an image which shares in the existence of nature; a photograph is a really existing hallucination."[30] Here Bazin, following the Surrealists, explicitly confounds Sartre's basic categories of presence and absence with the trace of an hallucination; for him, this is the ordinary condition of photography. Sartre would target surrealism with some of his most venomous attacks just after World War II. A philosopher of the classical stripe like Sartre could boil things down in 1943 to *Being and Nothingness*, but as Bazin responded years later, "for the man in the street . . . the word 'presence' today can be ambiguous . . . it is no longer as certain as it was that there is no middle stage between presence and absence . . . . It is false to say that the screen is incapable of putting us 'in the presence' of the actor. It does so in the same way as a mirror—one must agree that the mirror relays the presence of the person reflected in it—but it is a mirror with a delayed reflection, the tin foil of which retains the image."[31] Louis-Georges Schwartz takes this quote as a clear prophecy of Derrida's philosophy of trace and deferral.[32]

Bazin didn't stop at the photograph, a medium he actually never again addressed head-on. In that page of notes he went immediately to the documentary which, he wrote, "fills out" the document by putting it into its spatial and temporal surround. The photograph could serve the Surrealists well because it is cut off from all context. Isolated from the body, Boiffard's notorious close-up, "Big Toe," published in Bataille's journal *Documents*, acquires a bizarre power. Moreover, photos are ready-made to migrate to other contexts, as in photomontage. But each 35 mm frame of a documentary film is attached to its neighbor and every shot

implies relations of contiguity that describe a veritable interconnected world. Bazin makes us consider a pan shot in Landru's basement, where this oven would take its place amongst items that the mysterious Bluebeard collected or used. Shots of him in his house might follow, then the building and neighborhood where he resided. This kind of classic documentary stabilizes its subject in space, though it is now absent from us in time. Marie-José Mondzain would say that the documentary visualizes rather than incorporates its subject, surrounding its absence with light and shadow.[33]

Photograph and film – document and documentary – are equally dislocated from their subjects in time. Shot one day, developed later on, they must be experienced at a temporal remove. The greater the remove, often the greater the charm of the image, as the soul of its subject seems caught by light and shadow that were themselves caught by the camera at a given, now distant moment. Television changes all this, as Bazin points out in the final surprising sentence of his page of notes; for if televised, "the documentary becomes contemporary with the spectator," who is "led to participate in an event" taking place live before the camera. Today, television serves mainly to exhibit what has been previously recorded, but to Bazin, its theoretical significance lies in its potential for simultaneity, something still exploited in sporting events, the Oscars, newsflashes during disasters, and so on. Especially toward the end of his short life, when he was frequently confined to bed, Bazin had a lot to say about TV, just as would Serge Daney, who left *Cahiers du cinéma* to take up television criticism. For both men, cinema's delayed action is constitutive of its essentially reflective nature. The image bounces back to us after some time, echoing up from the past and permitting the spectator in turn to reflect on it, more than "participate in it" as we do with live TV. Television is present to us, the newscaster speaking at us in our homes at this very moment; whereas we head off to the cinema when we choose, and are then transported to another time "represented," not "presented," on a screen of reflection.

The modern cinema, from neorealism through the New Wave and up to our day, frequently exploits this difference in the temporal structure of the visual image. While *The 400 Blows* is remembered for its concluding still image, the photographic epitaph for the film, it also contains the remarkable sequence where Antoine Doinel responds to a social psychologist. The improvised dialogue, and the jumps in the image that mark ellipses in a single continuous take, simulate the directness of live TV and help establish Truffaut's particular sensitivity to the coexistence of spontaneity and elegy, of life and a recognition of its passing. Innumerable other constellations of image-oppositions can compete on the movie screen.[34]

Images Contested Today

Despite what has been thought heretofore, the aesthetic line propelled by Bazin's theory and elaborated after the New Wave by Daney emphasizes not spectacle and presence but trace and delay. What I have called "the *Cahiers* line," while hardly a single thoroughfare, serves as a main conduit of this aesthetic. You can see it in the tastes of that journal, where, for example, in the 1980s and 1990s the minimalist films of an Abbas Kiarostami have been championed, while the popular "Cinéma du Look" was immediately suspect. Daney set the tone against the latter trend in diatribes targeting the postcard images of Jean-Jacques Beineix, Jean-Jacques Annaud, and Luc Besson. A profound narcissism engulfs *The Big Blue* (*Le Grand Bleu*, Besson, 1988), a solipsistic 70 mm dream in which the catatonic spectator bathes for hours in the cinematic equivalent of amniotic fluid, and confronts nothing. As for *The Bear* (*L'Ours*, Annaud, 1988), it evacuates human interaction altogether, obviating any *prise de conscience* on the part of filmmaker or spectator. The "Cinema du Look" pleasures its spectators with an image filled to the brim with self-pleasure.

Daney's animosity exploded in a review of Annaud's *The Lover* (*L'Amant*, 1992, from the novel by Marguerite Duras). This

brilliant condemnation introduced him belatedly to English readers, for it was translated in *Sight and Sound* just as he died.[35] *The Lover*, he intimated, is a visual confection, a self-confirming presentation of recognizable views and objects (the commodities that it displays and that, in fact, it becomes). Instead, the cinema should use the constituting absence at the heart of the image to probe the novel and the real. The cinema he cares about urges the viewer to position him- or herself beyond the image and to take a position regarding the reality that the image calls up but never becomes. *The Lover* is a film of the visual. Each shot steps forward on its own, presenting itself like a consumer product on a billboard. How can such pictures possibly connect to or imply neighboring shots, Daney asks, since they are given as self-sufficient? This is a cinema without windows, where everything shown is just what we want to see (or have already seen), a TV version of cinema where we congratulate ourselves by recognizing what is already familiar, the visual world that surrounds and reassures us. In a brilliant intuition, Daney notes the decline of secondary characters in French cinema since the New Wave. Such characters used to float like clouds across the screen, he wrote. Even while our eyes were fixed on the stars, we could glimpse the autonomous movement of secondary characters drifting into the frame, then out of the picture. Today such characters, when they appear at all, are tied down to do a job.

Daney died too early to have entered the debate over *Amélie*, but you can be sure he would have registered both its punctilious deployment of every character, minor and major, as well as the literally pinned-down clouds that take on cuddly shapes for our pleasure. In *Amélie* the entire world order – human, animal, natural – has been organized for our convenience. As delectable as it may be, full of art-history citations and imaginative cinematic figures, *Amélie* is there to flatter us. In the film's prologue, Amélie plays up to us, describing herself as a film spectator with a prehensile eye: "I like noticing details that no one else does . . . " she whispers from her seat in a movie theater. And to prove it she isolates an accident visible in a famous shot from Truffaut's *Jules and*

Jim (*Jules et Jim*, 1962), an insect that somehow made its way on camera, crawling on a glass in the rear plane of the shot seemingly right toward Jeanne Moreau's sensuous mouth as it opens to receive Jim's tender kiss. Truffaut caught the insect by surprise; or, rather, the insect caught Truffaut by surprise. I asked cinematographer Raoul Coutard about this "mistake." It was, he claimed, the by-product of a miracle where nature (an unexpected and extraordinarily beautiful morning light) lined up with the fiction.[36] Working hastily before the light evaporated, Coutard framed the lovers in silhouette only to have the insect make its unbidden entry. The shot was so expressive that Truffaut never considered a retake. This is the kind of happenstance dreamt of by the Surrealists.

Like Amélie, the Surrealists used to scan the movie screen for details unseen even by the director, exercising what Christian Keathley has dubbed "panoramic perception."[37] Shooting with an anamorphic format (2.35:1) to promote just this sort of perception and to encourage such miracles of happenstance, Truffaut avoids the kind of obsessive pre-planning that Jeunet stands for. The latter, wanting to break the thrall of the New Wave that he is on record as vilifying, not only scribbles on *Jules and Jim*, but he teleports a Truffaut actress to his own film: Claire Maurier, Antoine Doinel's dissatisfied mother in *The 400 Blows*, was tapped to play Amélie's boss, the world-wise café owner. The café on rue Lepic may well be situated close to where Antoine Doinel spied his mother – this same Claire Maurier – kissing her lover, (*Cahiers* critic Jean Douchet). And Amélie, for that matter, may live in a building adjacent to the dingy Doinel apartment in the Clichy neighborhood. Having made his start in advertising and in highly stylized studio films like *Delicatessen* (1991), Jeunet has consecrated his first "outdoor" effort, by citing the breakout of the New Wave onto the streets of Paris.

And yet, his Paris looks nothing like Truffaut's or Rohmer's or Godard's. It's been tidied up, and not only by André Malraux' efforts to wash the city clean in the 1960s. Jeunet has digitally erased every unsightly or merely incongruous element, frame after frame. That insect that Amélie delighted to spot in *Jules and Jim*

would not have survived Jeunet's image scrubbing. The *Sight and Sound* review exults: "Beautiful images of cobble stone streets and steep Parisian stairways, corner bakeries and street markets abound; along with picture postcard views of Notre Dame, Le Sacre Coeur, the Pont des Arts, Parisian roofscapes, intimate cafés, and art nouveau metro stations . . . Inhabiting these locations are the 'little people' of Paris."[38]

Spectators may feel *Amélie* work its magic on them, but there was nothing magical about its production. Controlling every element of sound and picture, Jeunet engineered his fantasy with the precision of a watchmaker, each shot milled to move into position so as to engage the subsequent shot without friction. Truffaut, by contrast, sought friction at every stage of production.[39] The script of each of his first three films he found too easy to accept, and so during shooting he worked against the tone of what he had written. Jeanne Moreau's Catherine, utterly loveable on paper, he made difficult to put up with toward the end of *Jules and Jim*. He also slowed the pace of that film to put its exuberant prologue in perspective and to add gravity to mystery. Neither gravity nor mystery distinguishes Audrey Tautou's character nor Jeunet's film, except in those black and white videos that Amélie sends to the reclusive painter Dufayal: babies swimming in slow motion, a blues singer, a peg-legged black man doing a soft shoe. Did Jeunet introduce these germs of video to contaminate the self-satisfaction of his carefully coiffed celluloid pictures? Disturbed by this message from a world outside his studio, Dufayal returns with renewed inspiration to his version of Renoir's "Le dejeuner des canotiers" ("The Boating Party," 1871), determined to capture the mystery of one figure, "the girl holding the glass," whose depth eludes him. Amélie, looking on from the rear plane, holds a glass. Where Dufayal's painting fails, Jeunet's cinema will in the end solve her riddle.

Jeunet here calls on Pierre-Auguste Renoir to bless *Amélie*, perhaps to copy his capacious sympathy, the grace of his gaze, and the transparency of his representations. He joins those who have always taken Renoir as a bon vivant, enchanted by the way men

A travesty of Renoir Père. *Amélie.*

and principally women look, by the beauty of flowers and landscapes, by the eloquence of gestures . . . in short, by the glorious appearance of the world. But Renoir, according to his son, was after something deeper. If any filmmaker copied Renoir, it was his son, in the way he, like his father, used sympathy and comeliness as a tactic to burrow into and through what he pictured. In the very first pages of his biography, *Renoir My Father*, Jean wrote: "I admired my father's painting intensely, but it was a blind sort of admiration. To tell the truth, I was totally ignorant of what painting was. I was hardly aware of what art in general was all about. Of the world itself, all I could take in was its outward appearances. Youth is materialistic. Now I know that great men have no other function in life than to help us to see beyond appearances: to relieve us of some of the burden of matter—to 'unburden' ourselves, as the Hindus would say."[40]

Did Renoir learn this idea from Bazin's great essays about his films and especially about his "Hindu" film, *The River* (*Le Fleuve*, 1951)? A decade before Jean wrote of his father, Bazin wrote of the son: "Renoir understands that the screen is not a simple rectangle but rather the homothetic surface of the viewfinder of his camera. It is the very opposite of a frame. The screen is a mask whose function is no less to hide reality than it is to reveal it. The significance of what the camera discloses is relative to what it leaves hidden.

This invisible witness is inevitably made to wear blinders."[41] Those "blinders" are exactly what Renoir uses in the spyglass scene already mentioned from *Rules of the Game*. Christine uses her "camera" to look at birds and then by chance sights her husband in an "apparent" embrace with a mistress. Renoir, playing Octave, stands behind her and so seems to encourage her mistake, for she makes a mistake: the husband is in fact separating from his mistress for good so as to be true to Christine. This is the very turning point of the tragedy as Christine, believing from the visible evidence that her husband is traducing her, will throw off her naïve constancy and enter the whirling dance of untethered eroticism that leads to death and dispersion. Yet the image is not completely false, because the husband in fact had been having an affair with Geneviève. The camera provides a false trace of that truth.

Unlike Truffaut, and unlike Dufayal, Jeunet is an untormented artist; in his world everything can be pictured, each mystery unveiled. Indeed, the mechanism of discovery constitutes the chief pleasure of his aesthetic, rather like Amélie's practical jokes. She calls Bretodeau to the phone booth and to an encounter with his childhood, which she watches from the wings; she interrupts the broadcast of a soccer match; she exhumes a conjugal love by constructing, then posting, a 20-year-old lost letter. Even the film's one deep mystery, that of the phantom figure of the photomat, is explained in a trice at the end, but only after Amélie elaborately arranges an intrigue to force Nino to confront the source of the photos that haunt him. He discovers not a phantom, but a Wizard of Oz – the master of the apparatus – the photomat service man.

I take this photomat man to be Jeunet himself, a filmmaker who glues together strips of actors posing (24 poses a second, one might say) until they seem to move. And the album that holds these photos – the album whose loss and recovery triggers the love story – is the alpha and omega of the movie. Serving as storyboard and as casting agent's portfolio, this album returns in the final credits, validating at the end the integrity of the original idea. In sum, *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* is contained in the

album from start to finish. A *Cahiers du cinéma* editorial nastily noted that each shot is forbidden the slightest ambivalence.[42] In a way, Jeunet's cinema animates the publicity stills that comprise his storyboard.[43]

Dufayal – like Père Tulipe in *Le Million* (1931) or Godochot in *Diva* – is potent, benevolent, supremely surveillant, and capable of putting things right. All three films test the prowess of their directors in key scenes of runaway action. In *Le Million*, René Clair orchestrates the mayhem of a struggle on the opera stage for a coat containing a lottery ticket. In *Diva*, Beneix has a motorbike career at full speed through, then under, Paris, into the tunnels of the Métro. As for Amélie, she climbs aboard a car on tracks at the amusement park where Nino works behind the scenes. This attraction is an allegory of the methods and pleasures of cinema. A paying spectator, Amélie is transported into a world constructed to amuse, frighten, and astonish her. A tenuous narrative literally motivates the wax or plastic figures she encounters around each bend; they reach toward her threateningly in a precisely timed sequence of special effects. Then the real-life Nino jumps on the back of her car to give her what is the thrill of her life. At the film's end, he sits in the driver's seat of his motorbike, while Amélie smiles, happy to have been put at last into someone else's plot, rolling and unrolling in a Paris full of other fabulous destinies.

Like the stone she sends skipping across the Canal Saint-Martin, Amélie bounces lightly over the surface of Paris. By contrast, as Anne Gillain brilliantly notes, in *The 400 Blows* Antoine Doinel would enter into Paris' dark body, his true mother, as when he shoves the empty milk bottle he had filched into a sewer and listens to it shatter underneath the streets in the city's bowels or womb.[44] *Amélie*'s picture-postcard Paris is precisely the one Jacques Tati had satirized with such comic obliquity in *Play Time* (1967): the Sacre Coeur that dominates Jeunet's film is merely glimpsed in Tati's, when it is momentarily reflected in the windows of the suburban office buildings that have become the new center of the capital. La Defense (Tati's target) is shielded to the west from *Amélie*'s camera, and no one would suspect that dreary housing projects, home mainly to

immigrants, lie just beyond Montmartre (see the upper illustration on p. 53). Jamel Debbouze, the Moroccan comic actor who plays the stuttering Lucien, is anything but threatening; he adores Amélie, as does Nino, played by Mathieu Kassovitz, who directed *Hate* (*La Haine*) in those projects in 1995.

The film's ethnic whitewashing triggered a spiteful debate in France, one that *Cahiers* joined in its own fashion, by excoriating *Amélie*'s aesthetic of the "look." *Cahiers* has always tied ethics to aesthetics, perhaps submerging the former too deeply in the latter. In March 1959, Luc Moullet had declared in its pages that "Morality is a tracking shot," shocking a young Serge Daney into an understanding of cinema's responsibilities.[45] Daney's autobiographical *Postcards from the Cinema*, opens in fact with a chapter titled, "The Tracking Shot in *Kapo*," where he excoriates that film's director, Gillo Pontecorvo, for having aestheticized the Holocaust by moving in for a dramatic composition that perfectly frames the figure of a woman electrocuted on the wire fence of a concentration camp.[46] Aesthetics is not the philosophy of beauty, but of art, and in our day, especially in the cinema, art involves the unsightly. Jeunet applied mascara to improve the look of a sullied city; he altered his movie's "makeup," including, as many noted, the ethnic makeup of France.

French cinema has been most compelling and complex when, just like Catherine in *Jules and Jim*, it has both applied and stripped away its makeup. Smudges mark a rift between face and soul that, ever since the New Wave, has been traced by such films as *Passion* (Godard, 1982), *Boyfriends and Girlfriends* (*L'Ami de mon amie*, Rohmer, 1987), *A Nos Amours* (Pialat, 1983), and *Vagabond* (*Sans toit ni loi*, Varda, 1985). Where *Amélie* (the film like its star) is pure face, a comely poster without depth, these films hold to the idea of cinema as a relay of images that open onto a larger reality with a contested political future, one that spectators, eyeing each other upon leaving the theater, can better imagine.

This idea applies to cinema everywhere, even if it has been convenient for me to dramatize it through the example of French film. The plenitude held out by the movies ("something special to see") is ultimately satisfied neither by spectacle nor by the

artistically adorned image, but by the sense and process of discovery that occurs across and through (*à travers*) the screen. Bazin's idea is ever to keep the subject of a film in view, even as it resists being represented by an image. Fascination comes not through dazzling presence but through haunting absence, as recorded traces of a subject lead us in search of it. This movement of spectator in relation to what is seen takes time, as recorded images are traversed in a more or less guided event . . . the cinema event, let me call it. What did Bazin and his followers think was needed to prepare such an event, to put it together and compose it? The answer to this requires that we shift from the cinematic image to the edited film.

Notes

1. It's not unthinkable. See Nadia Bozak, "The Disposable Camera: Image, Energy, Environment," Ph.D. dissertation, Toronto University, 2008. Bozak alerts us to the material costs involved in an industry based on nineteenth century machinery, including intractable problems of refuse, as thousands of cans of 35 mm prints must be disposed of each week. This problem does not evaporate with digital cameras, for enormous amounts of energy go into producing electronic circuitry, and their ubiquity adds up to a significant amount of metal and plastic. Moreover, they are dumped or recycled when more advanced models come out. Camera-less cinema may someday be a necessity.
2. Sean Cubitt, *The Cinema Effect* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), p. 97.
3. Philip Rosen, "Old and New: Image, Indexicality, and Historicity in the Digital Utopia" in his *Changed Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2001). Thomas Elsaesser, "Digital Cinema: Delivery, Event, Time," in Thomas Elsaesser and K. Hoffmann (eds.), *Cinema Futures: Cain, Abel or Cable?: The Screen Arts in the Digital Age* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), pp. 201–22.
4. For a full discussion of this issue, see Louis-Georges Schwartz, *Mechanical Witness: A History of Motion Picture Evidence in U.S. Courts.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

5. Seung-hoon Jeong and Dudley Andrew, "Grizzly Ghost: Herzog, Bazin, and the Cinematic Animal," *Screen*, 49(1) (2008), pp. 1–12.
6. Serge Daney, *L'Exercise a été profitable, monsieur* (Paris: POL, 1993), p. 301.
7. Jean-Pierre Geuens, "The Digital World Picture," *Film Quarterly*, 55 (4) (2002), pp. 19–30.
8. Hervé Joubert-Laurencin gave me this term, meant to evoke the difference between Bergson's philosophy and Bergsonism, the popularization of his views.
9. Eric Rohmer, *The Taste for Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 40–53.
10. André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 24.
11. Serge Daney, "André Bazin," in *Cahiers Critique* (Paris: *Cahiers du cinéma*, 1986), p. 174. Originally published August 19, 1983.
12. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What is Cinema?*, p. 14.
13. André Bazin, in *Radio-cinéma-télévision*, no. 275 (April 24, 1955), reviewing *Naufragé volontaire* by Alain Bombard.
14. Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, "Le Tombeau d'André Bazin," lecture delivered in Caen, France, May 1998.
15. See my "Foreword" to *What is Cinema?* I (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004 edn).
16. André Bazin, "La Technique de *Citizen Kane*," *Les Temps modernes*, II(17) (1947), p. 945.
17. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940); translated as *Psychology of the Imagination* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1961).
18. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Noonday, 1981). I err in my "Foreword" to *What is Cinema*? I, in saying that Barthes fails to cite Bazin. In fact Bazin is mentioned on page 55. Joubert-Laurencin feels that Bazin is made to haunt Barthes' entire text by appearing fugitively in this single instant. I disagree, since the citation concerns the screen as mask, not the "ontology of the image," which Barthes writes about as though he were the first to conceive it.
19. Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," p. 14.
20. Sartre, *Psychology of the Imagination*, pp. 27 and 30. In Bazin's 1940 *L'Imaginaire*, the pages are 35 and 37.
21. Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," p. 10.
22. Sartre, *Psychology of Imagination*, p. 32; p. 39 in the French.

23. Bazin, "Cinema and Exploration," in *What is Cinema?*, p. 162.
24. See Dudley Andrew, *André Bazin* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 58.
25. In *Critique*, 7 (December 1946).
26. This footnote appears in the French but not in the English edition of *Verve*, which were published simultaneously in summer 1940. Hence it does not appear in the English translation available in Susanne Langer (ed.), *Reflections on Art: A Source Book of Writings by Artists, Critics, and Philosophers* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1958).
27. Joubert-Laurencin imagines Bazin and Benjamin working side by side at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 1938, where both were in fact pursuing research on Baudelaire. Might the BnF archives contain call slips from 1938 proving that they read the same books, perhaps on the same day? An excellent essay speculates on this relationship: Monica Dall'Asta, "From Benjamin to Bazin, Beyond the Image, the Aura of the Event," in Dudley Andrew, ed., *Opening Bazin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
28. Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illuminations: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of the Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). See also Dudley Andrew and Steven Ungar, *Popular Front Paris and the Poetics of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 358–67.
29. The photograph of the oven that Bazin probably had in mind is reproduced in an aptly titled book by Robin Walz, *Pulp Surrealism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 99.
30. Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What is Cinema?* translated by Timothy Barnard (Montreal: Caboose Press, 2009), pp. 9–10. Barnard's translation here and often is closer to Bazin's original than is the standard edition translated by Hugh Gray.
31. Bazin, "Theater and Cinema," from *What is Cinema?* II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 97.
32. Louis-Georges Schwartz, "Deconstruction *Avant La Lettre*: Jacques Derrida before André Bazin," in Andrew, ed., *Opening Bazin.*
33. See Marie-José Mondzain, "Can Images Kill?" *Critical Inquiry*, 36(1) (2009). Mondzain distinguishes between incarnation and incorporation. The former takes on the outer appearance of an absent thing, whereas the latter actually is fused to what it represents. Christ's image pictured in an icon incarnates Him without His being there; but

for the believer He is incorporated in and as the Eucharist, which is no longer a sign but the Person Himself.

34. For an inventory of, and brilliant meditation on, the interplay of photographs and films, see Garrett Stewart, *Between Film and Screen: Modernism's Photosynthesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
35. Serge Daney, "Falling out of Love," *Sight and Sound*, 2(3) (1992), pp. 14–16.
36. Raoul Coutard, Interview with the author, February 27, 2003, New Haven.
37. Christian Keathley adapts this concept from Wolfgang Schivelbush's *Railway Journey* (New York: Urizen, 1979) in *Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).
38. *Sight and Sound*, October 2001, p. 23.
39. Truffaut used contradiction strategically. See, for example, his *Le Cinéma selon François Truffaut* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), pp. 151 and 167.
40. Jean Renoir, *Renoir My Father* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962), p. 6.
41. André Bazin, *Jean Renoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 87.
42. Charles Tesson, "Lara contre Amélie," *Cahiers du cinéma*, July–August 2001, p. 4.
43. Both Jeunet and his cameraman Bruno Debonnet insist on the priority of the storyboard in "The Look of *Amélie*," featurette, disc two of DVD, *Amélie* (zone 1 version only).
44. Anne Gillain, "The Script of Delinquency: *Les 400 Coups*," in Susan Hayward and G. Vincendeau (eds.), *French Film: Texts and Contexts* (London: Routledge, 2000).
45. Luc Moullet, "Sur les Brisées de Marlowe," *Cahiers du cinéma*, 93 (March 1959). Often attributed to Godard, this celebrated sentence was used by Antoine de Baecque as a title for a chapter on New Wave politics and aesthetics in *Cinéphilie, Invention d'un regard, histoire d'une culture, 1944–1968* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).
46. Serge Daney, *Postcards from the Cinema* (Oxford: Berg Press, 2007), pp. 17–18. Actually, Daney recounts not his observation but Jacques Rivette's description of this "abject" camera movement.

Chapter 2

THE EDITOR'S DISCOVERY OF FORM

Even when taken by a neophyte, or by accident, raw footage can be innately fascinating in a manner different from pure animation, for it is based on photography. Naturally, a talented animator's drawings exert their own special fascination, but they are of a different order. As Bazin said, "The most faithful drawing can give us more information about the model, but it will never . . . possess the irrational power of photography, in which we believe without reservation."[1] A decade after Bazin's essay – and citing it – Edgar Morin elaborated the deep psychological urges that photography, and especially cinematography, appeal to. In *Cinema or the Imaginary Man* (1956), a book Bazin praised as the best thing written since World War II on the medium, Morin linked this appeal to the magical, uncanny effect that "doubles" such as shadows and reflections have always exerted on human beings, since, unlike drawings or sculptures, they apparently come from beyond the human realm.[2] Generated by photochemistry, optics, and mechanical intermittency, motion pictures belong at the outset to a category quite distinct from the visual arts. It was to overcoming this difference that classical film theory devoted so much of its effort. How could cinema transcend automatic recording? How could it become an art expressive of the human spirit and of ideas? Bazin – as

we have seen – is a modern, not a classical, theorist, for he accepts the value of mere recording, and he relishes the expressivity, as well as the opacity, of the nonhuman world registered by the photographic process.

Raw footage potentially contains "photo-genie" (Morin uses this old term like an incantation) that cannot be matched by the human genius we expect in theater, painting, and prose. And yet raw footage is there to be processed, cooked up, and refined into the products we call films. Occasionally Bazin mentions being stunned by an isolated shot in some random documentary that he stumbled across, like a boulder in the road,[3] but for the most part he was concerned with films, not with bare footage. How films deal with footage, how they press shots taken from reality into significance, this is what principally concerned him, and this is what I will call film composition. Films exhibit tension between the human (imagination, intention) and the recalcitrant chunks of recorded reality; the type or quality of that tension defines the styles, genres, and periods of film history. For instance, Bazin judges that "because the Soviet cinema was too forgetful of this [tension], it slipped in twenty years from first to last place among the great film-producing nations."[4] It had been tops, he believed, because Eisenstein's "science of aesthetics" operated creatively on real settings peopled by anonymous crowds. What about Russian cinema today? Or any cinema? Let us follow Bazin's plan "to look closely at where cinema is today," keeping in mind this tension between the raw and the cooked, through which "we can define categories, if not hierarchies of film style."[5]

Animation is one ascendant category, promoted by some to the top of the hierarchy of film styles today. As it was put to me not long ago: "animation is cinema in its purest form,"[6] for unencumbered moving images outrun photographically generated shots, which are held back by the drag of ordinary space and time. Under the new regime, all films, not just animated ones, should be viewed and assessed as efforts to respond to the imagination, liberated from mundane constraints. Bazin's idea goes counter to "cinema in its purest form." His theory of "impure

cinema" negotiates between man and nature, the imagination and the real.

Bazin's Forerunners

As we will see, this attitude is very much alive today; but before arriving at twenty-first century examples, let us return to the vocabulary he inherited and the films he kept in view when sketching the line of thought we are following out. Born in 1918, Bazin became an avid spectator just as sound made everyone newly attentive to the tension between the rawness of recording and the flights of art. Roger Leenhardt and André Malraux were, he freely admitted, the only voices worth listening to on the subject of sound cinema, for they both came on the scene after 1930. Bazin was in high school when Malraux won the Prix Goncourt for *Man's Fate* (*La Condition humaine*), and at the university when *Man's Hope* (*L'Espoir*) was published and the film version was screened (before being censored). Utterly entranced by this artist and revolutionary hero, Bazin joined a Malraux study group in 1942 at the Maison de la Culture, where he ran his ciné-club. This is why we can be certain that he had devoured Malraux' "Sketch for a Psychology of Cinema" when it came out in 1940, an article that he duly footnoted in his "Ontology" essay. But whereas Bazin drew wholesale on Malraux' evolution of artistic forms, and particularly on his view of the cul-de-sac of the baroque, he would not ultimately accept the way Malraux treated cinema with traditional artistic categories.

Bazin must have hoped that Malraux would be an innovator but, even after having just made his revolutionary film, his "Sketch" only consolidated the standard view of silent aesthetics wherein "the birth of the cinema as a means of expression (and not of reproduction)" occurred around the time of Griffith, "when the cameraman and the director became independent of the scene," so they could treat it creatively. Malraux had no use for Lumière's invention, which he compared to a phonograph, for it

simply *presented* on screen what it had filmed (playing back parades, geographical views, recreated historical scenes, stageplays, prize-fights). Only after 1910 did the *cinéma* proper emerge as it regularly *represented* situations, events, and stories by interrelating multiple views. In the case of the *cinématographe*, the spectator stands in the place of the operator of the apparatus, while in the *cinéma*, he assumes the viewpoint of the director who organizes a series of camera takes. Malraux declares that the cinema arose when the constricting frame, based on the stage set that contains the action, finally broke out into a wide field where the real action is that of the artist (cameraman/director) who moves about and chooses what to look at. The director organizes shots according to a vision that transcends them, whether this be a story, an argument, a feeling; in short, cinema delivers a point of view, not a mere view. This could come about only when the spectator, like the cineaste, became sufficiently detached from the scene before him through the operation either of a camera that moves independently of the scene it shoots or the operation of shot-changes that interrupt any single view.

Malraux wrote his "Sketch" while very much under the influence of Eisenstein, for *Potemkin* was the most powerful film he had experienced, and he had met its director to plan an adaptation of *Man's Fate*. But in invoking "montage," Malraux has in mind not Eisenstein's collage (or sometimes collision) of disparate elements, but a sequence of dramatic highpoints chosen from some extended "raw material" (his term). Unlike silent film where intertitles continually break up the action, motivating cutaways, permitting easy transition to dream sequences or flashbacks, and helping the script to fall readily into acts and scenes as on stage, "the talkie doesn't like gaps"; it naturally emphasizes the unbroken continuity of the story across the image track. This presumed "continuity" poses the knottiest problem for "*découpeurs*," the French term Bazin will pounce on, and it brings cinema much more into the orbit of the novel than of theater.[7]

Bazin had more tolerance than is usually thought for Soviet-style montage in silent film. But, as the architect of a theory of

sound film, he found it generally out of place. For instance, he mocked the puerile way (Bazin's term) that Capra's *Why We Fight* series leads the spectator along like a lecturer using a slide-show, "making a point" with each documentary image rather than letting those images show us what is in them (*demontrer* rather than *montrer*, reads the French).[8] Indeed, he praises Soviet montage at the expense of Capra's, and as his rave review of *Paris 1900* (Védrès, 1947) proves, he wasn't in principle against newsreel compilations. What mattered to him in that effort was the "tact and intelligence of the montage" which, in a manner opposite to Proust's, "rendered the paradox of an objective past, of a memory exterior to our consciousness, cinema being a machine to recover time, all the better to lose it."[9] In short, montage in the strong sense can lead us either to look more deeply into the images or away from them toward some meaning they have been chosen to illustrate. Unlike Capra, who muscled bits and pieces of film until they fitted into his argument, Nicole Védrès organized her archival footage so that each fragment would resonate more deeply than if it had been presented by itself. Montage in this case paradoxically enabled photogenie; thus Bazin concludes his touching review by praising Védrès' discretion in realizing that "chance and reality exhibit more talent than all the filmmakers in the world."

Overall, montage in the strong sense fell off in fiction films when sound entered the picture. Godard, who rebuked Bazin in a 1956 article, "Montage, mon beau souci," would do the most to bring it back, especially after 1965. But, as Timothy Barnard points out in his notes on Bazin, Godard was also a strong advocate of thinking about film form in terms of "*découpage*,"[10] something he learned from Bazin, whose famous essay known as "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" is taken mainly from a long catalog article that he titled simply "Découpage."[11] The distinction among these terms (together with the generic term "editing") is central. As Malraux intimated, *découpage* is a product of filmmakers deciding in advance how to parse the continuity of a fiction for its dramatic (logical) effectiveness and spatio-temporal design. Crucial to this conception is the priority of a continuous space and

time within which selections are made and the fiction ordered. When thinking spatially about a given setting or dramatic segment, particular qualities of mise en scène emerge; "*découpage*" enters as the temporal conception of how the fiction might unfold, one view upon the next. These terms preceded, and perhaps gave rise to, the theoretical notion of "the diegetic world,"[12] which is nothing other than the complete layout of a fiction's space–time possibilities, from which the actual mise en scène and *découpage* represent a series of studied or intuitive artistic choices.

In his 1936 "Little School of the Spectator," Roger Leenhardt wanted to familiarize the public, including Bazin – a reader of *Esprit* where it came out – with the way a film was composed. And so he "defined montage as being practiced *a posteriori* on the exposed film stock, and *découpage* as being practiced *a priori* in the filmmaker's mind on the subject to be filmed."[13] Leenhardt praises those filmmakers who probe the temporality within their material as it runs up against a developing whole to which it contributes. They *discover* rhythm, rather than impose it, in the mutual interaction of part and whole. The aptness of the discovery is validated by every viewer who experiences the propriety of a cut. The editor organizes a single experience by letting each moment stay on screen its proper length before giving way to its neighbor. "In English," Leenhardt reminds us, "*Découpage* is called *continuity*," and continuity is experienced as rhythm, "the control exercised by the mind over the material which has been filmed or is to be filmed." This aesthetic notion, stemming from Augustine through Henri Bergson, links matter to memory, letting the mind parse the world so as to bring out its significance.

Because continuity survives in the space between shots, in the same way that rhythm derives from the interval between notes, Leenhardt goes on to declare that "the essence of cinema [is] *ellipsis*."[14] Editors create the illusion of significance and of presence through the emptiness between and around their material. Of all cinema's effects, this is surely the most "special" and the most specific. Ellipsis may be just one in the panoply of optional literary tropes, but it "acts as the armature in the construction of a film."

The editor operates with chunks of recorded material and either carves this away to find its essence (the Robert Flaherty model) or, more often, organizes its relation to an idea or phenomenon or event that is suggested by the emptiness between and around what is shown. Whereas the French impressionists of the silent era had luxuriated in the fullness of the diaphanous image, and whereas Eisenstein asserted the primacy of muscular metaphor reached by imaginative leaps across stark oppositions of images, Leenhardt modestly indicates the everyday workings of cinema through metonymy and ellipsis.

He later confessed that "under its apparent modesty, [my] 'little school of the spectator' was a most ambitious project, the sketch of a completely new film aesthetic."[15] Thus was launched the line of thought that Bazin, a fervent reader and later close friend of Leenhardt, would soon take up. Too little known today, Leenhardt was deeply admired by Jean Rouch, for instance, who used to greet him as "ancestor, ancestor," an affectionate African expression of respect and filiation.[16] The *Cahiers* critics considered him a kind of uncle, knowing how much he meant to Bazin.[17]

Indeed, Leenhardt would never have come up with his views during the silent era. Sound de-sublimates the image. It insists on the physical source of the filmmaker's material rather than on the poetry of its effect. As he put it: we must work not with the *image* but with the *shot*, and sound secures the picture to a definite spatio-temporal source.[18] "Opposed to the 'photo-effect' which calls attention to itself, I want [the spectator] to be sensitive to the qualities of truly good cinema photography, a bit neutral in appearance, a discrete servant that understands the spirit of the film."[19] Leenhardt recounts complaining to his future cameraman, Philippe Agostini, about photographic credits in films that read "Image de . . . " The cameraman agreed: " 'Images de Philippe Agostini.' It's ridiculous! If you ever make a film, I'd be glad to work for you without trying to create 'my' image."[20]

This direct, unadorned aesthetic can be traced to the prestige that journalism gained during and after World War I, a tough brand of journalism in which facts are not to be interpreted but

streamlined, then put starkly next to one another for resonance and rhythm. The journalistic impulse helped film mature just when the addition of sound allowed ambient noise and dialogue to fill out scenes that formerly might have been enhanced through eloquent angles, lighting, gauzes, and other recherché devices. Even without the drag of sound, many films of the late 1920s had begun to be more palpable than their predecessors due to the switch from orthochromatic to panchromatic stock, together with the more natural lighting that this permitted.[21] The object had come into clear focus in its "density," he said, and the basic unit of a film was unquestionably "the shot" cut from the volume of the world, not the "diaphanous image" created by the cameraman.

Such an aesthetic owed much to Leenhardt's taste for the hard-hitting style of Hemingway, Hammett, Dos Passos, and James Cain, who had come into vogue in Paris; but it owed more to his profession: newsreel editor for *Eclair Journal*. Daily, he pared down stories out of the hundreds of meters of film dumped on his editing bench. Daily, he needed to find ways to present or to suggest topics and events that were too large or too amorphous for an overview.[22] Ellipsis was his stock in trade, the key technique necessary for the very operation of the *documentaire*, a mode he mastered in the late 1930s. It was to screen his documentaries that Bazin invited him to the ciné-club at the Sorbonne in 1943, where they had extended conversations. You can sense Bazin in Leenhardt's evocation of cinema's "primordial realism." Leenhardt then goes further than Bazin in highlighting his own work as an editor: "It is not in the cinematic material that art resides . . . but only in assemblage, rapprochement, ellipsis."[23]

These terms Leenhardt likely learned in reading the literary critics of the day. Like so many others in the 1930s, he was a devotee of the dashing André Malraux, France's most modern, journalistic author. *Man's Fate* embodies the emerging aesthetics of speed and precision, and Malraux backed other politically engaged writers, like the controversial Andrée Viollis. In his "Preface" to her tough anti-colonial reports from the field, *Indochine S.O.S.*,[24]

Malraux came up with a vocabulary that Leenhardt latched onto in his fight against the aestheticism that still lingered from the silent age:

> Malraux defined a new literary aesthetic which would rely on ellipsis in opposition to the ancient art of metaphor. This aesthetic is the aesthetic of cinema. It corresponds to the stage of precision which human information has achieved—photography is only one of its forms—and to a taste for the matter-of-fact, the document, which characterizes modern times . . . Ultimately, it reveals a new method in the interpretation and expression of the world. . . . Not the studied search for a "meaning" through acting or décor but a simple work of "rendering." Not an artistic exercise in expression but a technical effort of description.[25]

This "effort of description" occurs when ellipses suggest the contour of a subject by omitting moments and aspects in a spatio-temporal volume. Through reduction, whatever is given on the screen must be bolstered by all that is absent; and this can carry abundant parallel associations (rapprochements). Bazin would come up with a different view of ellipsis,[26] but he stands alongside Leenhardt in recognizing the primacy of what is not given on the screen. Indeed, he would go further, as was noted in the last chapter, taking cinema to be a trace, reality's "negative imprint." Godard has always been after the same point. In *Pierrot le fou* (1965), he has Belmondo read from Elie Faure's history of art: "After 50, Velasquez wanted to paint the spaces between objects." Bazin felt the same about cinema; a half-century old, this vaunted medium of the visible had matured and found itself to be in fact the art that traffics with absence, often *in absentia*.[27]

Documentaries in the Cauldron of History

Leenhardt and Malraux trained Bazin's eyes on the growth of an elliptical aesthetic in what his colleague at *Esprit*, Claude-Edmonde Magny, called this *Age of the American Novel*. His ideas about

editing were confirmed by the striking documentaries that came out each month responding to World War II and its aftermath. Bazin, like most critics, may have been chiefly interested in narrative cinema, but he could sense the entire institution challenged by the new documentary, so much so that he made it the lever of his theory.[28] Bazin was the first to intuit that World War II had brought a modern cinema into existence,[29] responsive and responsible to a descriptive mission that the customary (classical) style was incapable of fulfilling. The world to be represented had become was too vast, too rapid, too complex and violent for standard cinematic representation. Thrust outside the studio, cinema struggled to grasp a confusing reality through portable cameras, specialized lenses, tape-recorders, fast stock, color, even infrared. These inventions and improvements opened the way to techniques of aerial photography, night for night shooting, improvised mobility, and location sound whereby cinema learned to command huge expanses of space, and to represent phenomena and events previously out of range.

Less obvious, but I believe more significant, was the way documentaries manipulated the screen's temporal dimension. Thanks to experiences provided by wartime documentary, feature films could attempt to shape fictions according to temporalities quite different from the ones laid out by the *découpage* system. Bazin dared filmmakers and audiences to open themselves to worlds of experience whose temporal coordinates are disturbingly and revealingly variable. Most obviously, the war had demanded that cinema capture an urgency more fundamental than what classical dramatic filmmaking could produce. In his magisterial essay "The Italian School of the Liberation," Bazin attributed the immediate power of "resistance films" to a cinematography exhibiting the qualities of "a Bell and Howell newsreel camera, a projection of hand and eye, almost a living part of the operator, instantly in tune with his awareness."[30] The very limitations of image quality produce a gain in realism in on-the-spot situations, rather more like an artist's sketch than an oil painting. Bazin's analysis of Malraux' elliptical style complements the arguments he was

already formulating against the supremacy of classical (Hollywood) *découpage*, intimating that Malraux' nearly "incomprehensible" disjunctures force the spectator into an active mode of vigilance as in an emergency. *L'Espoir*, *Battle of the Rails* (*Bataille du rail*, Clément, 1946), and *Paisà* (Rossellini, 1946) deprogrammed standard dramatic tempo, forcing the spectator to catch up with events that unfold or come into existence at an unpredictable rate. Each of these films takes place in the intermittent time of guerilla action and reaction on a contested landscape. Their timescales can be reduced to the shortest imaginable: a man noticing a spider on the wall just as he is executed (Clément), a stray bullet hitting a partisan in Florence, the sudden recognition of social conditions by a black soldier in Rome (Rossellini). They force the spectator to be alert to happenings whose causes are invisible, or too minute or oblique to be noticed. Such films must be grasped on the run.

Jarring ellipses bring out the speed and violent pace of life as lived and imagined after World War II, although they surrender visual context (including panoramic space), psychology, and character interplay. All of this puts the viewer into a relation with the topic that can be called psychologically realistic. As for "total realism," or rather its impossibility, Bazin likened the situation to physiological limitation: the cones and rods of the optical system are sensitive to different visual domains; animals endowed with keen night vision see only in black and white, missing the information provided by color.[31] Bazin wanted to identify each film's chosen place on the realism spectrum, so as to watch it on its own terms.

At the other end of that spectrum was Georges Rouquier's 1945 *Farrebique*, the international critics prize winner at the very first Cannes festival. Ellipsis functions quite differently here. No contingency or happenstance deflects its fastidious depiction of a farmhouse in central France. The opposite of the combat film, its timescale is not that of the urgent instant but rather of the inexorable calendar year, and by implication, the time of the Earth itself, the time that industrialization had lost track of. Rouquier wanted nothing to "date" his film,[32] subtitling it "*les Quatre Saisons*," as

opposed to such Rossellini titles as "*Germania Anno Zero*," or "*Europa 51*," yet it remains historical for all that.[33] Slowing things down, Rouquier wanted the land to be recognized in the literal sense of the term, including mud puddles, homely men and women, animals and their manure . . . whatever standard cinema has tastefully skipped over or left out in its attention to drama and art. "Rouquier," Bazin said, "had understood that verisimilitude had slowly taken the place of truth, that reality had slowly dissolved into realism. So he painfully undertook to rediscover reality, to return it to the light of day, to retrieve it naked from the drowning pool of art."[34]

Bazin is not naive. Even had *Farrebique* jettisoned the cloying metaphors and "parasitical aestheticism" that Bazin reproved, it would not have directly captured the real. In one of his trademark formulations he says: "Thus, the most realistic of the arts shares the common lot. It cannot make reality entirely its own because reality must inevitably elude it at some point. Undoubtedly, an improved technique, skillfully applied, may narrow the holes of the net, but one is compelled to choose between one kind of reality and another."[35] In his essays on neorealism, the net or filter would describe the relation of filmmaker to subject matter. In every film, some portion and type of information reaches us from a superabundance of the visible stream; whatever is on the screen has made it through the filter of the lens, so to speak. As with an infrared filter, reduction can bring out the structure of the subject, highlighting details otherwise difficult to discern.[36]

The filter may be the spatial equivalent of the temporal ellipsis, since both reduce information in the service of clarity, consistency, and impact, and Bazin came to prefer it as a metaphor for cinema. After all, the ellipsis depends on the editor's decision about what is dramatically important. While Leenhardt uses the term "monteur" for editing footage taken earlier or by someone else, and Malraux uses "*découpeur*" for the "editing in the head" that the filmmaker goes through in preparing his script, both suggest the imposition of order on raw space and time. Bazin was not ready to give up the potential in that rawness. Had De Sica cut

Umberto D. (1952) according to principles of ellipsis, its most famous sequence, the pregnant maid grinding coffee in the morning, would have been reduced to a few seconds. But De Sica let the camera roll and included apparently random events, such as her spraying water on insects on the counter and tapping the door closed with her foot. Irrelevant, these details haunt the film, and they have haunted criticism about it ever since.[37]

In its most basic cinematic application, ellipses let our minds grasp something too extensive in space and time to be conveniently presented completely to our eyes. If Vigo edited *A propos de Nice* (1930) using inventive ellipses, it was first of all because the city and its festival necessarily escape a single take. Although he shows us nothing outside the city limits, Vigo's shots amount to a point of view . . . Nice as filtered through his consciousness.[38] The filter operates optically at the recording stage when a certain lens, film stock, or a literal filter regulates the kind and amount of light recorded by the camera, as well as when the filmmaker chooses particular angles, focal lengths, and distances. Another kind of filter is at work on the editing table when one subject is pursued while others fall away. So when groups of already filtered shots are chosen to be joined into sequences, often 90 percent of the raw material and 50 percent of the selected shots pass through the movieola and onto the floor, to be swept up and tossed away. The finished film, Bazin says again and again, puts us into contact with reality through what our eyes see concentrated on the screen. More than Leenhardt and Malraux, he was prepared to let the happenstances of nature more than the art of the editor determine the shape of the finished film.

So let us not ever be fooled by Bazin's supposed epiphanic ontology, just as he says we mustn't be fooled by appearances. What is on screen is not reality but its precipitate, its tracing, its remains which, like the mummy, may allow us to conjure the presence of something fuller, the phantom of that paradoxically more solid reality that hovers spectrally around, behind, or before the screen. Fidelity to appearances, yes, but so as to pass through them to the soul of something at once more and less substantial

. . . the soul of a dramatic event, the destiny of a person, the spirit of a novel.[39]

The *Cahiers* Line

This "aesthetic of discovery" stands at the antipodes of a cinema of manipulation, including most animation and pure digital creation; it asks us to accommodate our vision to the conditions of visibility given by the world rather than, as in the aesthetics of new media, reworking the world until it conforms not only to our conditions of viewing but to our convenience and pleasure. The "cinema effect" aims straight at the spectator's neurological makeup, whereas Bazin's line of thought goes toward a world (physical, moral, artistic, virtual) beyond the screen. His conception of cinematic composition developing in dialogue with the new cinema of Renoir, Welles, and Malraux can be located in a single sentence that he penned in the 1945 version of the "Ontology" essay, later amended and softened in *What is Cinema*? "Le cinema apparait comme l'achèvement dans le temps de l'objet, etroite photographie."[40] This enigmatic formulation – nearly a koan – suggests the inescapable otherness of cinema's photographic basis by flipping attention from human time to "the time of the object," and so from the image to the shot. The entire *Cahiers* line of thought depends on this redefinition of cinema's elemental makeup. Daney says right out: "cinema is not made of images but of shots, and the shot is the indivisible bloc of image and time."[41] In 1945 Bazin somehow grasped this radical idea. While the photographic document stands fixed, the filmed documentary presents its objects quivering in their own time, and suspended within a field of multiple determinations; as the film unrolls, any object's integrity or identity can come into question. Ambiguity thickens the referent, since a plethora of the object's relations to its situation keep it from being completely "fixed."

The *Cahiers* line traces itself along a certain strain of fiction films that would form a spine, whose vertebrae bear the names of

auteurs. Three in particular were in contact with Bazin and his young followers around 1950: Rossellini, Resnais, and Bresson. Rossellini was said to have rendered the moral reality of cross-cultural understanding in *Paisà*'s six episodes of resistance, stepping stones of an elliptical story of Italy's liberation. Soon after, he caught an otherworldly beauty when, in *The Flowers of St. Francis* (*Francesco, Giullare di Dio*, 1950) he filmed an actual Franciscan community rehearsing their founder's life – imitating it, as they are meant to do – in eleven episodes, or "flowers." Bazin distinguished the elliptical structure of Rossellini from classical narrative by identifying the tension between his overarching artistic or moral drive and the specific situations filmed, situations that possess idiosyncratic properties that cinema mechanically delivers and safeguards. Each of the six segments in *Paisà,* each of the eleven flowers of Francis (and each scene within these 17 segments) has the uniqueness and solidity of a rock in the river of a film before serving as a narrative ford that Rossellini urges us to cross. Traditional literary realists shape scenes to fit the narrative. Hollywood can claim a version of realism in many of its genres; but Hollywood, Bazin says, molds and bevels all shots into form-fitted stones or bricks seamlessly joined with their neighbors to construct the bridges of its stories. In a classic Hollywood product, the spectator crosses over without danger of misunderstanding or diversion from the opening credits to the "finis." But with *Paisà* you have to watch your step, scrutinizing the shape and placement of each stone in the film as you jump from one to the next. Occasionally you may slip or at least get your leg splashed. Ford versus bridge. What is true for Rossellini is true for Bazin. Every piece is important in its own way, yet points beyond itself:

> The structure which Rossellini has created allows the viewer to see nothing but the *event* itself. Just as some bodies can exist in either an amorphous or a crystalline state, the art of Rossellini consists in knowing what has to be done to confer on the facts what is at once their most substantial and the most elegant shape—not the most graceful, but the sharpest in outline, the most direct, or the most

> trenchant. . . . To have a regard for reality does not mean that one piles up appearances. On the contrary, it means that one strips the appearances of all that is not essential in order to get at the totality in its simplicity. The art of Rossellini is linear and melodic . . . [as in] a sketch, more is implicit in the line than it actually depicts.[42]

In 1954 came Rossellini's *Voyage to Italy*, the first fully modern film, Jacques Rivette proclaimed in *Cahiers*, against which all other films would now have to be measured. This *Voyage*, elliptical in the extreme, comes to us in Ingrid Bergman's successive encounters with Naples' abundant life (pregnant women, babies everywhere) and more abundant death (funerals, exhumations, catacombs) that she sees, at first protected by the windshield of her car and by local guides, but which ultimately she can't avoid facing directly. In a well-known sentence, Bazin said that Rossellini's cinema is composed neither of images nor of shots but of "facts."[43] Imagine a musical score comprising not a series of notes but of facts. This is how Jacques Rivette trumpets *Voyage to Italy*, declaring it to be the first truly modernist film.[44] In that emblematic sequence already evoked, George Sanders and Ingrid Bergman are forced to look into themselves as they watch an archeological dig at Pompeii. The bodies of two humans, surprised by death two millennia ago, gradually emerge into view, shocking the observing fictional couple into self-recognition. They have stared at the facts and have trouble looking away. Through ellipsis and rapprochement, Rossellini's editing hollows out a space for the gradual or sudden appearance of a truth. "Things are there; why manipulate them?" he famously said,[45] but getting at those things, getting at the facts, is another matter. He would pass on to the Nouvelle Vague this ethos of digging underneath the stereotypes of plot, character, and action. Stunned by *Voyage to Italy*, Truffaut offered his services to Rossellini, whom he met at Bazin's home. Godard too worked for him in the mid-1950s.

Then there was Bresson; though solitary and unsocial, he joined with Bazin and Jean Cocteau in 1948 to form the Ciné-Club of the Champs Elysées, just as he was planning *Diary of a Country*

Priest (*Journal d'un Curé de campagne*, 1951). Bazin located the sublimity of that masterpiece in the way Bresson filtered what Bernanos had already provided in the elliptical format of the diary. The priest, and we with him, experience a rural landscape through the constant filter of his moral gaze, which becomes the true subject of the film, the priest's idiosyncratic in-scape, indelibly sketched. Bresson exerted enormous influence over *Cahiers*, most tellingly in Godard's interview with him following the premiere of *Au Hasard Balthasar* (1966), another episodic film, this one paced inhumanly, and so disconcertingly, by the experiences of a suffering animal. As Serge Daney put it, at *Cahiers* we were attracted by films that looked back at you, as animals do, from their otherness.

Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) was the first film that Daney remembers staring him down, turning him from a mere spectator into a restless viewer, a *cinefils* as he called himself (a pun on "child of cinema" rather than "cinephile"). Daney, who would become easily the most important critical voice to follow Bazin in France, was 13 when he and his mother were shocked by what they saw – and didn't see – in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. Through a kind of persistent psychological groping between two nameless lovers, there emerges an inhuman reality that we normally cannot or will not face.

Cahiers made Resnais' film the centerpiece of a famous roundtable discussion that set Daney on his itinerant vocation: "if the cinema were capable of *that* . . . I had an answer to the tedious question: 'what are you going to do with your life?'" We know what he did with his too brief life. He took over *Cahiers* and formulated the dictum that Resnais provoked and I repeat: "the cinema is tied to reality and reality has nothing to do with representation." *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, 1955), the supreme example here, calls up but does not pretend to represent the Holocaust. Resnais digs beneath the serene color landscapes of Auschwitz, unearthing a layer of the past – we cannot quite call it history – and of literally unrepresentable horror. His signature tracking shots descend into the black hole of abomination. No one since Eisenstein has made so much of montage; but whereas the

Russian juxtaposed image to image, Resnais opposes *images taken* in color to *facts given* in black and white. The black and white footage is made up of "non-Images," as Daney was to call them.[46] The "givenness" of an unimaginable event derails the tracking camera, sinking it beneath the verdant landscape to what remains (the camps' "remains"). What do we now do with them? Indeed, "what do we do?" asks the film in its conclusion. Bazin's remark about *Voyage to Italy* applies more aptly to *Night and Fog:* "Facts are facts, our imagination makes use of them, but they do not exist inherently for this purpose."[47]

Tout la Memoire du monde, made a few months later, elaborates the existential conundrum that doubles the shock that *Night and Fog*'s pictures deliver: How can the present partake of the past; yet how can it avoid the past? The Bibliothèque nationale stands as a monument to this paradox. Here, the hard facts of human history do not lie beneath an anonymous field; they are concentrated in a fortress of memory. Like the fussy employees of the Bibliothèque, Resnais treats each book or arti*fact* – from anonymous periodical to renowned manuscript – as a fact in an insoluble mystery. The facts overwhelm us, even when fastidiously tended, organized, catalogued, and guarded. As Roger Odin has put it, the film is composed of an opposition between actual and metaphorical space, between things and imagination. The accumulated weight of the past, sublimely immobile, is put into play by the incessant movement of human need and desire, figured in the camera that tracks the labyrinthine stacks.[48] As in *Night and Fog*, two temporal orders are shoved together, fact and desire. In the sole dramatic sequence of an otherwise utterly descriptive work, a book is called for, retrieved, and brought out of its mausoleum to the guarded public space. Resnais signals the transit from one temporality to another as a chariot wheels up to the customs house of the circulation desk. Then, as it passes into the reading room, the monologue lifts itself in lyricism:

> And now the book travels towards an ideal line, an equator more decisive for its existence than passing through a mirror. It is no

> longer the same book. A moment ago, it was part of a universal memory, abstract, indifferent . . . but now this one has been singled out, indispensable to its reader.

The book is grasped by the waiting hands of a human being (an intellectual worker) whose interest allows it to respire for an hour before being returned to the eternal memory bank of which it forms one unit. With magisterial distance, Resnais looks down on the reading room, stands above that search for "happiness" that keeps the scores of human bookworms (figured also as bees) busy as they burrow into their separate texts. Their seriousness and absorption – calling for books, silently scribbling notes, scratching their heads – makes them appear as unthinking as the books they devour in their quest.

Resnais' two haunting essay films fulfill the hopes that, nearly a decade earlier, had driven Alexandre Astruc's manifesto "Pour une nouvelle avant-garde: la caméra-stylo." Astruc challenged filmmakers to address philosophical subjects through cinematic discourse.[49] Resnais did just that. His films can be taken as "compositions" in the literary sense; intriguingly, they are composed of the camera's confrontation with both a recalcitrant physical world and with an equally unalterable literary reality (texts by established authors like Jean Cayrol, Remo Forlani, and soon Marguerite Duras). Even when commissioned, the freedom of the short film allowed Resnais, Marker, Franju, Varda, and others to experiment with bold compositional strategies. When given the chance to make features at the end of the 1950s, they were responsible for the birth of the modern cinema: *Cleo From 5 to 7* (*Cleo de 5 à 7*, 1962), *Eyes Without a Face* (*Les Yeux sans Visage*, 1960), *Hiroshima Mon Amour*.[50]

The title Varda gave her film promises and nearly delivers complete temporal continuity, for only a half hour is elided from five o'clock to seven, one ordinary Parisian afternoon. But seen through the filter of Cléo's gaze the city begins to reveal itself. Like Katherine in *Voyage to Italy*, this self-centered beauty comes to recognize the blinders she wears, and eventually allows herself to

engage the world outside her, and specifically a soldier about to return to Algeria. Her epiphany is all the more miraculous for being so precisely set in place and time. *Hiroshima Mon Amour* equally depends on precise coordinates, except that in this film two times and two places come together in the bodies of a Japanese man and a French woman. As in *Night and Fog*, raw footage contests the desires of humans to deal with both the past and the present ("You saw nothing in Hiroshima, nothing."). Neither "the document" nor the "documentary" contains or can deliver the trauma of what is essentially the absence hollowed out of human history by the atomic blast. Resnais must have seen the Peace Museum that had just opened in the city, and that occasioned the film in the first place, as a monument to emptiness. In order to represent such emptiness, human beings with profound desires were needed, just as Resnais needed to picture those fanatical readers at the Bibliothèque nationale. Marguerite Duras supplied what Resnais required. She created not characters so much as embodied desires, two nameless people probing each other with the language of desire, probing the pasts onto which each opens like a doorway. Resnais' camera tracks through these doors, discovering absence in the heart of passion, death in the midst of life.

Pursuing Cinema in the Twenty-First Century

What does composing a film mean in our epoch? Permit me to bring back *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*, whose worldwide success ought to make it a good indicator. From the outset, a rapid-fire voice-over accompanied by a brisk montage recounts the engrossing fairy tale of a timid girl whose wish for a magical life comes true when she realizes that she can silently sweeten the lives of others through good works. That realization comes to her after she pines away in her lonely room literally dreaming "Amélie la destinée brisée," a black and white melodrama-cum-newsreel played out quickly on screen in 29 shots. This comic-book résumé of a virtual life serves as the model and engine of Jean-Pierre

Jeunet's montage, which throughout the film will swiftly build sequences of marvelously disjointed fragments that add up to one stunning episode after another. One of these comes straight out of Amélie's head when she tries to imagine why Nino has stood her up. The following voice-over accompanies thirty quick shots that take us through a wild thread of incidents:

> Nino was late because three escaped convicts had held up a bank and taken him hostage. Pursued by all the cops of the area they succeeded in getting away. But he managed to cause a car accident. When he regained consciousness he couldn't remember a thing. A truck-driver, ex-taulard, picked him up and, thinking him to be a rebel, threw him into a container, destination Istanbul. There he fell in with some Afghan adventurers who proposed that he leave with them to steal Soviet warheads. But their truck hit a mine near the Tajikistan frontier and he was the sole survivor. He hid out in a mountain village and became a militant Taliban. Still Amélie couldn't see why she wasted her time on a guy like this who would spend the rest of his life eating borsch with a stupid vase on his head.

Jeunet clicks off one brief shot for each separate episode of the narrated dream. Many sequences adopt this clipped storyboard approach, with the beginnings and ends of shots precisely demarcated, often punctuated visually or aurally. In this way, each shot cleanly makes a point or delivers a single idea that contributes to a sequence whose trajectory has been long ago determined at the writing stage. Jeunet gives us several emblems of this aesthetic in the credits: a set of strawberries on fingertips are swallowed in rapid succession, long rows of plastic bubbles on a sheet are popped one after the next, and, clearest of all, sinuous standing dominoes fall into one another. Those tumbling dominoes – the film's first image – model the overall strategy of one shot falling into the next, which brings its neighbor to fall until the entire suite renders the pleasure of patterned finality. Of course dominoes have to be milled to be homogeneous, then lined up just so. This is the function of the storyboard from which, Jeunet proudly claims,

his shooting does not deviate. For every element must function predictably and every character must exhibit precise "likes and dislikes" before participating in what are truly the "machinations" of the plot.

The film is parsed into episodes that its benevolent heroine engineers to surprise and help her acquaintances in the neighborhood. Her ingenious tricks depend on the moral equivalent of Newtonian physics, as she lines up a sequence of elements, each of which is put in play by its predecessor to serve as relay or armature in the machine. She leads Nino on at Sacre Coeur, using a phone booth, a statue, chalk markers, and a telescope in just the proper order of discovery. She tortures the greengrocer by systematically altering his morning routine (alarm clock, gargle, shoes) until he is ultimately deposited in front of his stall in the middle of the night. Amélie is a director of the moral plane. And beyond her, Dufayal the artist looks on, a stand-in for the director, who, sexless and reclusive, engineers a most fabulous erotic destiny for this angel. Reviews gushed that *Amélie* brought charm and magic back to cinema.

Of course it is not magic at all, but the calculated work of film composition (editing) that leads these characters, followed closely by fascinated spectators, to their preordained destinies. Such is the pace of *Amélie* that few spectators ask themselves just how they are being carried along. And if they did ask, how would they respond? The complexity of audiovisual editing stumps even film students when they are asked to break down a sequence of a classic film, let alone ten minutes of a Godard. Editing, the middle phase between recording and projection, remains remote and opaque to the general public, although this is where the filmmaker's rhetorical or expressive talents take over from the partly unpredictable moment of recording and the completely unpredictable effects of projection. Perhaps the reason is that, unlike the camera or projector, the editing bench or movieola is an unfamiliar apparatus, though its successor has recently entered the common market as computer software with a name like "Final Cut Pro."

Editing a film today invariably means transferring all audio-visual inputs into digital information that is then manipulated up to the point of the final cut. Only a few in the industry complain about this undeniable technological progress and the speed and convenience that it brings, not to mention the limitless options for correcting and enhancing the raw material. There remain intractable artisans who, thinking of editing as a form of sculpture, need to touch celluloid and measure the length of shots in meters rather than in time-code. Many actors and directors of the old school rue the *decomposition* of scenes into discrete elements as the debasement of their profession, forgetting perhaps that *découpage* of one sort or another has always been involved. Jean-Pierre Geuens lamented this shift of emphasis from shooting to post-production,[51] as the art of "composing" mise en scène has given way to the skill of "compositing" layers of visual elements. Martin Scorsese insisted on making *Gangs of New York* (2002) at the Cinecitta studios in Rome, knowing that this might be the last big-budget film shot entirely on set with all the actors present for their scenes.[52] He hoped to capture (or discover) the nuances of significance in the gestures of Daniel Day Lewis, Leonardo DiCaprio, and the rest of the cast as they played against each other in real space. He understood this real space to be one of artifice, and had to help the actors find their gestures through rehearsals and often scores of retakes. But the movie's primary composition occurred right there and then, not later on at the computer. Actual sunlight, enhanced by reflectors of course, bounced off faces in real time. This meant a lot to Scorsese in his attempt to dig into his script and his actors. Things would be different for him in *The Aviator* (2004), although even here the key scenes were blocked out with the actors confronting each other in real space, whereas *Lord of the Rings* (Jackson, 2001–3), *King Kong* (Jackson, 2005), and certainly *Beowolf* are so densely composited that each face seems photographed separately, in its most telling pose, to be added to the shot and then to the sequence by the editor. Perhaps blockbusters made in this manner deserve to be classified as "animated movies."

This would not bother Sean Cubitt who, in *The Cinema Effect*, insists that long before the digital – indeed, starting with Méliès – films have been built up from elements cut together on a bench or in a laboratory. He argues that "The Cut" turns the sheer visual energy (not yet information) of a camera-take into units that have shape and perspective. Here the producer exercises control over the film process, achieving through editing those effects that audiences have conceived of as marvelous.[53] Editing stands as the medium's primordial "special effect," unchanged, Cubitt believes, even if now performed on AVIDs rather than benches with synchronizers and rewinds. But might not the new materials with which editors work alter the very conception of that work? The "cut" originally sliced into a strip of celluloid at the frame line. Those rigid lines blur on the AVID, which measures units not by length (number of meters, feet, or frames) but in time-code.[54]

Even with new technologies allowing control over the image, the idea of "cinema as discovery," wherein the director is not full in control, is still available, still indispensible. Today, this "idea of cinema" is espoused eloquently by such *Cahiers* directors as Olivier Assayas and Arnaud Desplechin, who speaks of "digging scenes." He means by this getting beneath the visible to open up what is latent or hidden within a script, within a situation, and within the actors who enter on this journey with him.[55] The advent of the digital has only increased the number of directors worth attending to, and working on a host of new subjects through the different filters of their style. Some, like Abbas Kiarostami in Iran and Jia Zhang-ke in China, have fully converted to the new technology, praising its convenience, flexibility, and unobtrusiveness. The idea of cinema opened up by Roger Leenhardt persists, no matter what technology drives it forward.

And it can come from anywhere. In 2007, the Palme d'Or at Cannes went to a Romanian director espousing an ethic and an aesthetic that *Cahiers* praised. The Jury at Cannes, all too often caught up in the economics and politics of the entertainment

industry, this time stuck to the principles governing the awards. As Frodon put it in *Cahiers* that June, just after the event:

> [The fact that the Jury gave] the top prize to a film as talented and without concession as *4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days*, made by a completely unknown director like Cristian Mungiu, says something

Vulnerable girls in the city. *Amélie/4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days.*

> in itself and is better than a nice gesture . . . This choice is meritorious for several reasons: first of course, for the film itself and its auteur, but also for this young Romanian cinema which *Cahiers* several times over the past two years has singled out and supported in its rise to prominence, and finally for the sake of minor cinemas everywhere in the world and their hopes for renewal.

Although like *Amélie* in taking on the secret life of a vulnerable young woman in a big city, *4 Months* (*4 luni, 3 săptămâni şi 2 zile*, 2007) stands opposed to that French film's aesthetic in every way. Where Jeunet's camera bounds through Paris, penetrates cracks in an apartment baseboard, climbs to mountaintops, and generally makes the entire visible world available on screen (not to mention fantasies and visions – those cute animal clouds), Mungiu rigorously restricts himself to what his heroine, Otilia, sees and encounters. And where Jeunet crisply connects hundreds of fragments into several baroque plotlines woven around Amélie's labyrinthine path from conception to finding happiness, Mungiu quietly lays one super-long take after the next to comprise 16 hours of a single, traumatic day. No voice-over narrator underlines what we are meant to note. Of course, at 110 minutes, plenty of ellipses in time and far more in knowledge make the spectator struggle to fathom what Otilia is up against and what she is thinking.

4 Months carries a pedigree that goes back to *Umberto D.* and Zavattini's gambit to make a film about 24 hours in the life of someone to whom nothing happens. While much does happen in his film, Mungiu, like De Sica, stands ready to expend precious time on mundane micro-events. He gives us the equivalent of the scene Bazin had singled out in *Umberto D.*, shot in real time, in which the pregnant housemaid sits to grind coffee, turning the handle of the mill again and again. In *4 Months*, he has Otilia lead us down the hallway of her dorm, ducking into the shower room, locating friends in another room that serves as a black market for cosmetics, stopping to pity a kitten temporarily being sheltered by a student we never see again. This sequence, also shot in real time,

lays down the gray temporality of innumerable dull days in socialist Romania, one just like the next, against which an intense drama develops on the twenty-first day, third week, and fourth month of Gabi's pregnancy.

Leenhardt would have identified each brief encounter in the hallway as a rapprochement, a picture from the larger world that parallels or resonates with the specific events that Otilia and Gabi undergo: hygiene and the female body in the shower, the hushed black market trade (including pirated VHS tapes) behind closed doors, and an orphan kitten needing protection. Malraux would also have saluted Mungiu's judicious ellipses, both for the trim way they starkly thrust us into the center of an essentially moral drama and for the way they force us to try to piece together a world that the girls likewise confront as mysterious, not wholly given. Ambiguity and menace persist even when scenes develop without a cut: the family dinner at the boyfriend's apartment; the negotiation with the abortionist, so subtle that few spectators know when and what deal has been cut; and – daringly, drastically – the abortion procedure itself on the plastic bag covering the sheets of a hotel bed, viewed from first to last.

That hotel bed is also the site of the film's most important elision, when just minutes before the abortion, Otilia is fucked by the abortionist as part of the deal. This is the unseen moral hollow at the center of both the social and the filmic system, its black hole. Mungiu doesn't really censor himself here, for this awful event unrolls while Gabi waits outside in the lobby, then in the bathroom, fully aware, as are we, of what is transpiring just a few feet away. It is the only shot in the entire film from a point of view other than Otilia's, marking something about which, in the last line of dialogue, Otilia says she will never again speak. This is a world we must evoke from limited angles, often in obscure light, and from bits of dialogue that provide hints of motives and suggest interconnections between people we never meet but whose roles we must guess.

On only one occasion does Mungiu slip up when he provides us information and a view beyond Otilia's. He opens a sequence by

following a random cyclist in a sweeping pan past kids playing football in the bare service yard of a nondescript housing block. Just as the cyclist passes a car pulling into the yard, Mungiu cuts to Otilia and the abortionist side by side in the front seat. The rule is immediately reestablished, for when the abortionist gets out and walks over to his mother on a distant bench, the camera stays with Otilia's limited view. She (and we) must guess at what is going on.

4 Months unrolls in and as a series of secrets, ambiguities, and prevarications. Its signal topic, abortion, necessitates this, with everyone involved risking incarceration. Yet everyone involved is apparently already incarcerated in the grim rooms and buildings of a grim city. The foetus, wrapped in a towel, is carried through dark alleyways, then up sinister stairs to the eleventh floor of an anonymous building, and sent down the chute into the dumpster below. It will never again come up in conversation, the girls agree, while they stare at the unappetizing plate of meat a waiter brings them. Meanwhile, in the background, merry-makers at a wedding carouse.

Social critics have been quick to characterize this film as a political swipe at communism, and it surely is that; but Mungiu rightly insists that his carefully written script aimed to carry his characters and the spectator into the milieu and sensibility of a certain period, one which often resembles German street films and the noir they spawned in French poetic realism and then in Hollywood. But unlike those films from the classical age, *4 Months* refuses itself the convenience of a savvy narrator, voiced or otherwise omniscient. The dark secret of abortion leads the film into the darker secrets of the social order that wants to remain hidden to the citizens it keeps under surveillance. We may come out unsure about the workings of this world, but thanks to the rigor and propriety of Cristian Mungiu's style – the filter he has imposed on himself and on us – we are very sure about how that world feels, and we can discuss the consequences of just that feeling.

The opposition between *4 Months* and *Amélie* drawn out at length here can be replicated with many pairs of films and

cineastes, but perhaps never more starkly than with Jia Zhang-ke and Chen Kaige, an opposition dramatically evident on the pages of *Cahiers*. Jia Zhang-ke expressed his distinct conception of cinema in a candid interview concerning *Still Life* (*Sanxia Haoren*), his 2006 Venice Prize winning film. Jia recounts the distribution battle that his film lost to such state-sponsored blockbusters as Zhang Yimou's *Curse of the Golden Flower* (2006) and Chen Kaige's *The Promise* (2005). *Still Life* found itself shoved to small theaters on Beijing's periphery, while its competitors, made with the largest budgets in the history of Chinese production and carried along by enormous advertising campaigns, dominated scores of theaters throughout the capital and the country. The bitter controversy that spilled into the Western press involved more than the standard fight between art and the entertainment industry. It involved the nature of cinema, and on many levels.

Although *The Promise* wound up as a grave disappointment, Chen sold this project on the strength of digital breakthroughs allowing him to effectively animate images shot in Super 35 mm. *Still Life*, reversing the process, was shot digitally but then edited with a distinctly film aesthetic. Both films feature an important canyon sequence. Early in *The Promise*, the hero finds himself amongst an army of slaves at the bottom of a ravine overseen from a cliffside by a warlord and his entourage. Chen builds the suspense leading up to a stampede of bulls through the ravine by cutting back and forth between the slave and the warlord. As in *Amélie*, nothing escapes Chen's camera. We even get a close-up of the buzzing hornet that bothers the warlord and that, two shots later, he captures in his fist. In the intervening shots, the hero glances up to spy the warlord, then puts his ear to the ground to register the threat that is heading toward him. The camera makes its way right into his senses, eye and ear. Once the action starts, we track with the hero as he dodges oncoming bulls, then outraces them, his master on his back. We experience superhuman movement in digital time on the ground, from the eye of a charging bull, from the hero's point of view within the herd, then skipping over the backs of the animals to keep up with his supercharged running; intermittently we

All-seeing warlord. *The Promise.*

are afforded magnificent overviews from the warlord's perch, then helicopter shots of the sinuous grand canyon above them all, dust rising into the air. Chen has animated one of his country's most famous tourist locations.

Still Life takes place at even more famous location, The Three Gorges. A most intricate sequence begins on the bridge of a tour boat leisurely heading downstream. Rather than the omniscient narrator who recounts the legend of *The Promise*, *Still Life's* voice-over comes out of the boat's loudspeaker in the form of an historical account of the project, including a Tang-era poem about the canyon. Cutting to the main deck, Jia Zhang-ke focuses on a TV monitor taking up two-thirds of the screen in foreground. A black and white historical newsreel shows party members inaugurating the dam project that is now well under way. To the left in mid-plane passengers wander about, perhaps conversing, while behind them, out of focus, is the landscape that the official voice continues to tell them about. A cut to the heroine sitting alone on deck finds her drinking from bottled water, then glancing out beyond another boat they are passing toward the hills above the river, as the voice fades and nondiegetic music sets a meditative mood. The next sequence fades in to find the hero on a hilltop, looking down. A ferry's horn sounds as he and we see what may be the same tour boat below, for we can make out the timbre of the tour guide's

faraway voice. The camera pans at the speed of the boat, whose rhythm its clacking motor beats out as the sequence ends. Jia Zhang-ke here quietly brings into proximity his two characters, whose lives never intersect as they both search for their partners. And he does so at once in real time and layered in history (the Tang dynasty poem, the newsreels). As in *The Promise*, the canyon is viewed from high and low, but without the eyes of the characters drawing the vector – indeed, without any plot connection whatever. They are part of the flow of the river and of history, the film flowing in the same manner.

Speaking about the title his film carries in the West, he told *Cahiers* that in addition to suggesting a painting: "It suggests the exposure of traces of a life that is no longer there, or rather of a way of life about which there remains only the most basic evidence. Despite everything, *Still Life* wants to convey the feeling of life by the intermediary of the simplest objects, cigarettes, wine, food: it is through such things that people communicate no matter what, that they sense being together even without talking. These banal objects structure the film."[56]

In three puzzling moments, *Still Life* exploits the special effects its digital images always make available. A shooting star sails in the night sky, some buildings in the background of a scene suddenly crumble, and – most startlingly – an oddly shaped memorial sculpture suddenly lifts off the ground and into space while the heroine looks on, without registering the fact. Just as in his earlier masterpiece, *The World* (2004), Jia Zhang-ke is ready to deploy animation, but always in the service of cinema, not trying to exceed it. The young characters of *The World*, imprisoned in the theme park where they work behind the scenes, escape by funneling their hopes into the cell phones they continually consult. In a daring move, Jia Zhang-ke inflates the brief text messages they send one another into brilliantly colored wide-screen animation sequences, as emotions encrypted or decoded burst through these tiny phones into the fullest, most liberating space imaginable. The virtual world accessed via text messaging has become the only world that counts for those who work inside "The World." As

Emmanuel Burdeau put it in *Cahiers*, Jia Zhang-ke presents miniatures of great monuments on the one hand, and he produces outsized cinemascope reproductions of tiny cell phone screens on the other. Scale is convoluted.

These extraordinary animated sequences seem to celebrate and contribute to the intoxicating freedom of the digital, and yet like the theme park that gives the film its title, they are circumscribed by the human and social drama which they interrupt like holes in cheese. Jia Zhang-ke is, it turns out, a modernist, devoted to the kind of discovery that the neorealists made their mission. His film registers the slippage between coexisting temporalities that make life in China at once painful and compelling in this new century. And the images we take away alternate between the colors of dream and the dimly lit illegible faces of the hero's peasant relatives from Shang-xi province, who arrive in Beijing to claim their son's body (and an indemnity) after a construction accident. The light of digitally produced animation here brings a neorealist subject to begin to appear.

And so, the idea of cinema promoted here does not rise or fall with technology. A cinema of discovery and revelation can employ any sort of camera. Moreover, such a cinema only begins with shooting. Composing (not compositing) a film in the editing stage has ever been "*un beau souci*,"[57] whereby the interplay of seen and unseen draws a subject to appear, often, as Bazin would say, not

Dimly lit illegible faces. *The World*.

center-screen but "in the filigree." In *Horizon cinéma,* a *Cahiers* manifesto published in 2005, its editor at that time, Jean-Michel Frodon, insists on cinema's pact with the audience.[58] Films must be sourced in the real, he avers, in order for the friction produced when artistic design rubs up against the real to spark the intermittent light of imagination and reflection. Under this flickering illumination, the audience develops (in the photographic sense of the term) the subject that appears before them in suggestive fragments. For the duration of the projection they respond and adjust to these evocations. In the best case, the film plays itself out beyond its projection, in discussions on email, in classrooms or coffee shops, and in the pages of journals like *Cahiers du cinéma.* Discovery, never finished, produces unpredictable effects, but it is not, in itself, an effect at all.

Notes

1. André Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," in the new translation by Timothy Barnard, *What is Cinema?* (Montreal: Caboose, 2009), p. 8.
2. Both Bazin and Morin mention the cave paintings at Lascaux as the first evidence we have that humans thought magically about images. *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* indicates that painting in our culture no longer is taken to be an actual double, though voodoo figures and other religious icons certainly qualify. Photography is the magical image in which the modern era believes.
3. He was shocked "in the spring of 1949" by the image of communists "executed in Shanghai with a revolver on the public square." See "Death Every Afternoon," in I. Margulies, *Rites of Realism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 30.
4. André Bazin, "Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation," *What is Cinema? Volume II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 24.
5. Ibid., p. 25.
6. This point was well made and well defended by Adam Rosadiuk in a symposium at Concordia University in Montreal, organized by Martin Lefebvre, March 2005.

7. André Malraux, "Sketch for a Psychology of The Cinema," *Verve*, 8 (June 1940); reprinted in Suzanne Langer (ed.), *Reflections on Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968 [1958]), section two.
8. André Bazin, "'On *Why We Fight*; History, Documentation, and the Newsreel" in Bert Cardullo (ed.), *Bazin at Work: Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties* (London: Routledge), p. 190. The translators render Bazin's term "montage" as "editing." It would have been more apt if left as "montage."
9. André Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinema?* tome 1 (Paris: Cerf, 1958), p. 41.
10. See the extensive notes on "Découpage," "editing," and other terms that Timothy Barnard supplies for his translation of *What is Cinema?* (Montreal: Caboose, 2009), esp. pp. 251–6, 261–81, and 286–8. Barnard reminds us that there is a reason we retain French terms like "montage" and "mise en scène" in English, for they are slippery and have led translators to deliver key concepts inconsistently, even contradictorily.
11. André Bazin, "Découpage," Catalog of the Venice Film Festival, 1951 (French version). The Italian version carries the title "Il Montagio."
12. The Greek term "diegesis" was employed first by esthetician Etienne Souriau in 1951. See Alain Boillat, "La diégèse dans son acception filmologique," *Cinémas* (Montreal), 19 (2–3) (2009), pp. 217–45.
13. Roger Leenhardt, note 4 to his "Cinematic Rhythm," in Richard Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, 1907–1939*, vol. II (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 205; originally published in *Esprit*, January 1936.
14. Leenhardt, "Cinematic Rhythm," p. 203.
15. Leenhardt, *Les Yeux ouverts* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1979), p. 79. His articles appeared in 1935–6 in *Esprit* under the heading "The Little School of the Spectator."
16. Leenhardt *Les Yeux ouverts* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1979), p. 76.
17. André Bazin, "Roger Leenhardt: *Les Dernières Vacances*," in *Le Cinéma français de la liberation à la nouvelle vague (1945–1958)* (Paris: Editions des *Cahiers du cinéma*, 1983), pp. 149–50.
18. Leenhardt, "Cinematic Rhythm," p. 201.
19. Leenhardt, "La Photo," in *Chroniques du cinéma* (Paris: Editions de l'Etoile, 1986), p. 45.
20. Leenhardt, *Les Yeux ouverts*, p. 80.
21. Leenhardt, *Les Yeux ouverts*, p. 80.
22. Leenhardt, *Les Yeux ouverts*, pp. 68–9.

23. Leenhardt, "Cinematic Rhythm," p. 204.
24. André Malraux, "Preface" to Andrée Viollis, *Indochine S.O.S.* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1934).
25. Leenhardt, "Cinematic Rhythm," p. 204.
26. In his long review of Malraux' *Espoir*, Bazin questions the use of ellipsis in film. See *Cinema of the Occupation and Resistance* (New York: Ungar Press, 1981), pp. 146–54.
27. Godard thematized this in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* when he included the anecdote about Ernst Opik, "an astronomer who in 1932 calculated that over half the mass of the solar system has gone missing. From the movement of what was visible, Opik hypothesized the existence of a vast cloud (the Ort Cloud) . . . the unseen back side of the planets, so to speak."
28. Hervé Joubert-Laurencin calculates that 8 of the 18 essays collected in the first volume of his assembled writing ("Ontologie et Langage") concern documentary, whereas in his overall oeuvre they make up but 4 percent. Colloque "les écrans documentaries," Université de Paris 7 – Denis Diderot, November 1997.
29. Robert Kolker in *The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), Giorgio di Vincente in *Il Concetto di modernità nel cinema* (Parma: Patriche editrice, 1993) and Gilles Deleuze in *Cinéma II: L'Image-temps* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1985), would make the same claim in the era of academic film criticism.
30. André Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism and the Italian School of the Liberation," in *What is Cinema? Volume II*, p. 33.
31. Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality," p. 29.
32. John Weiss, "An Innocent Eye? The Career and Documentary Vision of Georges Rouquier up to 1945," *Cinema Journal*, 20(2) (1981), pp. 55–7.
33. Pierre Sorlin, "Stop the Rural Exodus," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and TV*, 18(2) (1988), p. 193.
34. André Bazin, "Farrebique or the Paradox of Realism," in *Bazin at Work* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 106.
35. Bazin, *What is Cinema? Volume II*, p. 29.
36. A good example is in Bazin's "Defense of Rossellini," in *What is Cinema? Volume II*, p. 98.
37. For a brilliant analysis of Bazin's treatment of this scene, see Alain Chevrier, "Realism, Surrealism, Neorealism," in Dudley

Andrew (ed.), *Opening Bazin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

38. Bazin references Vigo's film and his claim for a "documented point of view" in a review of Chris Marker's *Letter from Siberia* (1956), in *Le Cinéma français de la liberation à la nouvelle vague*, p. 180. See Steven Ungar, "'Radical Ambitions': Bazin's Questions to and from Documentary," in Andrew (ed.), *Opening Bazin.*
39. Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, "Tombeau d'André Bazin," *Imagens*, XXX, Sao Paulo, p. 11.
40. Joubert-Laurencin measures the difference between the 1944 and 1958 formulations in his "Document de synthèse," prepared for his Habilitation at the Université de Paris I, December 2004, p. 10. Bazin's softer 1958 version we are all familiar with reads as follows: "Le cinema apparait comme l'achèvement dans le temps de l'objectivité photographique."
41. Daney, *L'Exercise a été profitable, monsieur* (Paris: POL, 1993), 22, cited in Joubert-Laurencin, "Document du synthèse," p. 48.
42. Bazin, Defense of Rossellini," p. 101.
43. Bazin, "Defense of Rossellini," p. 100. He uses the term "facts" frequently in discussing neorealism. See, for instance, *What is Cinema? Volume II*, pp. 35 and 77.
44. Jacques Rivette, "Letter on Rossellini," in Jim Hillier (ed.), Cahiers du cinéma, *vol. 1, 1950s: Neorealism, Hollywood, New Wave* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 192–3.
45. "Interview with Rossellini" by Fereydoun Hoveyda and Jacques Rivette in *Cahiers du cinéma*, April 1959. One "thing" that "was there" during the shooting of *Voyage to Italy* was Rossellini's deteriorating marriage to Ingrid Bergman. Katherine's reactions to the fictional event resonate with Ingrid's to the genuine situation that she was living out not far from Pompeii in her daily life in Rome.
46. Serge Daney, *Perseverance* (Paris: POL), p. 256. Hubert Damisch cites this phrase in his dispute with Didi-Hubermann: "Montage of Disaster," *Cahiers du cinéma*, 599 (March 2005), p. 76. This essay, translated by Sally Shafto, is available through the *Cahiers* website.
47. Bazin, "Defense of Rossellini."
48. Roger Odin, "L'entrée du spectateur dans le documentaire," in Dominique Blüher and F. Thomas (eds.), *Le Court Métrage français de 1945 à 1968: de l'âge d'or aux contrebandiers* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005), pp. 78–9.

49. Alexandre Astruc's manifesto "Pour une nouvelle avant-garde: la caméra-stylo," translated in Peter Graham, *The New Wave: Critical Landmarks* (London: Palgrave, 2009).
50. See the "avant-propos" and many of the essays in Blüher and Thomas, *Le Court Métrage français de 1945 à 1968.*
51. Jean-Pierre Geuens, "The Digital World Picture," *Film Quarterly*, 55 (4) (2002), pp. 19–30.
52. See, for instance, the review by Peter Travers in *Rolling Stone*, January 2, 2003.
53. Chapter three of Cubitt's book is titled "Magical Film: The Cut." See especially p. 66.
54. Martin Lefebvre and Marc Furstenau, "Digital Editing and Montage: The Vanishing Celluloid and Beyond," in *Cinémas*, 13(1–2) (2002).
55. Arnaud Desplechin uses this expression in many interviews; for example, with Jeff Reichart in *Reverse Shot* (Summer 2005).
56. Jia Zhang-ke, *Cahiers du cinéma*, May 2007.
57. Godard, "Montage, mon beau souci," *Cahiers du cinéma*, 65, December 1956.
58. Jean-Michel Frodon, *Horizon cinéma* (Paris: Editions *Cahiers du cinéma*, 2005).

Chapter 3

THE PROJECTOR AS SPECTATOR'S SEARCHLIGHT

Of the three sectors comprising the film phenomenon, projection is the one where Bazin's line of thought is at most risk of breaking off or bending out of recognition. Has the digital era brought with it a shift so profound in how films are screened that we should no longer expect the same of, or from, them? That we should perhaps no longer even assume the phenomenon to be related to the cinema that went before?

Decisive shifts have been announced for other moments. Gilles Deleuze divides film history at World War II into the era of the movement image and that of the time image. Bazin witnessed that particular break, explicitly using the term "classical" to characterize analytic *découpage* (the classical Hollywood style) and "modern" to identify the ascendant method of Renoir and the neorealists. What he called modern, for instance, I am putting forward as that medium's most deeply etched line, one that came into its own after 1945 but is not confined to that moment. With shots rather than images taken to be its basis, film history could be rewritten so that the 1920s work of Flaherty and von Stroheim would be counted, *avant la lettre*, in the modernist tradition, just

as I believe that line persists into postmodernity in the films of Jia Zhang-ke and Hou Hsiao-Hsien.

Used flexibly and with sufficient suspicion, these crude terms suggest clusters and patterns of ideas about changes in the arts and culture. For instance, while it has undergone its own evolution from classic to modern and beyond, cinema *in toto* must be regarded as the great medium of the Modern era in the long timeline of Western culture that Régis Debray lays out in *Vie et Mort de l'image*.[1] Oil painting was the gold standard of Classical Europe from the Renaissance up to Romanticism, losing its priority to photography, which opens the Modern period in 1839. Every form of representation in modernity is implicitly measured against the photograph, until the digital arrived in the 1980s as the referent point for representations in the current age.

Despite Debray's claim that a mighty change has taken place in the last two decades, most films today are planned and carried out just as films have been since the 1930s. True, they are assembled by digital editing programs and often display moments of computerized special effects, but most play out longstanding generic formulas, with actors engaged in dramatic situations on location or in studios. Animated features have blossomed thanks to the digital, and critics, always looking for a paradigm shift, trumpet a new entertainment age visible in blockbusters like *Harry Potter* or *Avatar*. Yet movies as usual, produced according to time-honored templates, remain the norm; if their cellular structure has mutated, it has done so almost imperceptibly,[2] with filmmakers taking advantage of digital conveniences, even while they affectionately extend or aggressively deform traditions that in any case they are well-schooled in. And so, although options have been vastly expanded for new sorts of audiovisual productions, it is premature to assert that image capture and editing have been so radically transformed that cinema has morphed altogether. *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) looks quite familiar.

But audiences may no longer experience movies as they did throughout the cinematic era, and so a genuine revolution may have taken place in "projection." Directors could be working

according to time-honored conventions, producing genre or auteur pieces worthy of the best films of the past, but no longer can they count on or even fully imagine the way their images will encounter the public. The theatrical run of even a quality film is brief, trumpeting its dispersion on video which, though often lucrative, has proved difficult to govern. Viewers who used to huddle together under the big screen now put the film at their mercy, watching it how and when they like, often alone or with family and friends, pausing, rewinding, even reworking it if they choose. When asked about the potentially deleterious effects of the digital on cinema, Jean-Luc Godard unhesitatingly declared that nothing essential in the production arena had been altered, but that the film experience itself was at mortal risk. For him, the cinema *qua* cinema exists only in a public space, where a diverse audience sits still as the projectionist sends out over their heads images that picture an enlarged world. "One looks up at the cinema," he quipped, "and down on television."[3] With small screens in all their avatars, the consumer controls the experience. For Godard, this spells the demise of the alternate public sphere that movie theaters constituted during the bulk of the twentieth century. Unquestionably a space of ideological inculcation, the movie theater nevertheless let popular politics develop: a thrown-together public concentrated for two hours on a view – someone's point of view – of the world.

The Internet makes possible, even forges, new forms of affiliation and political engagement, forms pertinent to a world where face-to-face encounters and street demonstrations have lost their appeal and their force. Movies still address spectators – indeed, more movies address more kinds of spectators than ever before – but the concentration and simultaneity of the cinematic experience is no longer the norm. Régis Debray calls television an apparatus of dispersal. Illuminated from within, TVs and computers radiate light emitted by vibrating pixels; they reflect nothing. Seldom turned off, they sit indifferently in various rooms of every house, part of the environment like animated billboards along highways. How different this is from the movie screen that you reach after pushing past a curtain or door to find a seat in a

darkened auditorium. The movie theater is a voluminous space, a giant cerebellum, within which people who step out of their lives reflect upon images that are themselves reflections. Jean-Louis Baudry once warned that the cinema is a modern Plato's cave where humans stare at shadows, chained by ideology. Yet because they choose to enter this cave – indeed, they pay to do so – spectators can channel their fascination with the screen into a discourse about what they see reflected there: a view of the world, a point of view about how to live within it or how change it. This was the promise of that public sphere.

The Power of Projection

From conception to projection, films are calculated *reductions* of information, which thereby concentrate what they display. The French term for focus, *mise-au-point*, gets at cinematographic concentration. Not everything in the visual spectrum makes its way to the screen, but what does get there has the advantage of being relevant. Relevant to what, you ask? The next chapter will answer: "relevant to *le sujet*," to the subject matter, however clearly or nebulously this may be delineated at the outset. Films work toward their subjects by cutting away or filtering out whatever is impertinent, although in some cases – often the most important – random and contradictory elements are admitted because the subject matter is in flux or is itself contradictory enough to require such overflow. If Bazin was not the first person to think of cinema in terms of a filter, he was the first to do so systematically.

The screen is the ultimate interface between human viewer and world viewed,[4] not the world pure and simple, but the world's deposition, so to speak, where traces are deposited like bits of ore or, to use one of Bazin's favorite similes, like iron filings. These filings are themselves photographic reductions, often in black and white and taken through a monocular lens with fixed focal principles, as opposed to the saccadic properties of the mobile and

embodied human eye. The cineaste compensates for these limitations by shooting from many angles, amassing a huge archive of raw footage on the subject; yet everything will be stripped away except the "final cut." What shows up on the screen, then, is neither some pure form of reality nor some pure form of cinema, but bits of sensory data shaped by – and shaped for – thought and imagination as it confronts a subject.

A filmmaker's thought and imagination – his conscience, Bazin said – should be visible in the quality of selection that filters those bits of data for the final cut. Thus style isn't something added to the subject; it emerges as a pattern of consistent reduction and shaping. It is the sensibility hovering over the film, Bazin said, like a magnetic field that organizes what is there into something morally significant. For their part, spectators don't take in everything projected on the screen in equal measure; moral beings themselves, they filter what becomes a movie only when projected. As the word itself implies, "projection" goes beyond what has been captured and organized. To project is to see not necessarily *more* than is there but, rather, to see *through* what is there. Thus any projected film – the result of the camera's and the editor's filters – becomes itself a filter for the viewer. It concentrates vision so as to get beyond the visual to visibility. Occasionally, it is said to reach the visionary.

Films exist prior to and in the absence of projection; not so the *movies*. Stored away in cans, films remain the inert record of people and situations, whether captured from the world at large or concocted on sets. Only when projected do they come to life as movies, taking shape in the mind of each spectator and addressing an audience.[5] Always a target of speculation, the preconditions and consequences of cinematic projection come into dramatic focus on certain occasions. Jean Rouch witnessed – indeed provoked – more than one of these. After the very first projection of *Les Maîtres fous* (1955) at La Musée de l'homme, Marcel Griaule, Rouch's mentor and France's leading anthropologist, begged that the film go into the museum's vault and that the general public never "be exposed to" the precious but incendiary images that

Rouch had brought back from Ghana the year before. He was sure it would only harden reprehensible stereotypes about African savages. Rouch paid no heed. Though he appreciated Griaule's warning, he wanted Europeans to face up to *Les Maîtres fous*. It caused a shock, winning the "Best Short" award at Venice in 1957. After that it largely disappeared from public view for decades, for Rouch grew cautious, understanding how inflammatory it was. Particularly in the United States, it became a notorious object that cinephiles of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s bragged about having seen clandestinely.

Numerous are the examples of censorship; what makes *Les Maîtres fous* special is that someone like Griaule could vouch for its importance as a record (that is, as a film), but insist that it not be screened alongside the most interesting movies of the year. By now, Rouch has been vindicated and few take *Les Maîtres fous* to be an orientalist peepshow into savage rites.[6] Rouch's camera did record Hauka initiates entering a wild state, during which, showing themselves impervious to pain, they slaughter and eat a dog on the spot; but he also edited these images to intercalate those of pompous European colonial figures, drawing explicit parallels between the two cultures in his voice-over commentary. A carefully constructed composition, *Les Maîtres fous* begins and ends in the workaday milieu of Accra, then follows its subjects on their Sunday religious outing into a forest where their rituals have a cathartic effect, cleansing the sins of the faithful and uniting them in a sacramental community of believers. Rouch shows his subjects transformed at the end, landing gently back in the city, where each has regained the strength and confidence to face life in an otherwise foreign and alienating land. He explicitly likens these rites and their effects to the Catholic Mass, so that *Les Maîtres fous* becomes an anthropological essay on religion in general, not just among an exotic group in Niger or Ghana. While the filmed images undoubtedly comprise a rare record of seldom-seen practices – something that remains from the past – the projected movie reaches out to the future through the public it affects.

Because it was projected – and to acclaim – *Les Maîtres fous* stands out among the 20 trance-films Rouch made in West Africa from the late 1940s on. It elaborates both a narrative and an argument, whereas most of the others exist only as archival records, awaiting a scholar to pore over them one day on a movieola. Still, even unworked footage can have powerful effects when lifted from the archive and projected. Bazin registered their innate power in his first encounter with Rouch's work at the 1949 Biarritz "Festival des films maudits." That power was nowhere more evident than when Rouch would screen his films of rituals for the groups involved, in the manner of home movies. On more than one occasion, with a generator powering his projector, Rouch witnessed certain spectators fall into full-fledged trances while watching themselves, effectively repeating performances that expend so much physical energy that it can take days to recover. Trances are

Trance and ciné-trance. *Les Maîtres fous.*

always dangerous. Rouch needed to be cautious about projection, understanding the term in two ways: as his own provocation aimed toward a European audience, and as the process of hypnotic identification that leads certain vulnerable subjects into hazardous states.

Les Maîtres fous stands out as an especially powerful work because its subject as well as its method includes dangerous projections, mimeses, and transmutations. We observe the bodies of the participants become mediums inhabited by Hauka spirits. When one participant flails about as "the train conductor" and another as "the corporal of the guard," representation becomes real before our eyes. By extension, Rouch tempts spectators to become other than what they are through the "medium" of what he always called his "ciné-trance." It's an exhilarating prospect, but a troubling one, given what we see. Like these Africans, we too have our day jobs, then enter the theater to pass into another realm through a ritual in which identification becomes intense. Relieved of ourselves for a time, in touch with fellow communicants and with the mysterious others lurking beyond perception, we ultimately return to our lives when the projection is over, presumably refreshed. Is this not a common definition of catharsis?

More obviously than most films, *Les Maîtres fous* exists in three separate states, each capable of provoking controversy. Few fault Rouch for documenting (*capturing* and preserving) the secret rites of the Hauka, since the group urged him to do so, and since gathering material in this raw state is a standard practice in ethnography. But some have questioned his rhetorical use of this footage, his way of *editing* it into a discursive text, its second state. And many have been outraged that he would *screen* this work either in Africa or in the West, since it could very well produce nefarious effects beyond the filmmaker's control, effects of *abjection* (some spectators vomiting, others segregating Africans into an unsightly corner of their minds) or of *pro-jection* (the trance whereby one loses oneself to something unknown and powerful).

Rouch worried about the ethics of projecting many of his films. Beyond their strong yet uncertain psychological effects,

screening films to the subjects of those films can have unpredictable sociopolitical consequences. His massive project from 1967 to 1974 to document the seven-year Dogon ceremony known as the "Sigui," which takes place at 60-year intervals, will surely alter that event when it comes around again in 2027. For the first time in 400 years, the Dogon can now appreciate what their processions look like when seen from above (Rouch often perched his camera on the Bandiagara clifftops). That is, participants in this new century's rendition will have a perspective that none of their ancestors ever had before. Moreover, they no longer need rely on the memory of the elders to instruct them in this tradition, which has been passed down orally since the 1600s. Transferred to VHS, now to DVD, Rouch's images of these sacred rites can be sampled on any ordinary evening when someone in the village turns the generator on to power the TV and recorder. Discussions within the group about improving choreography and costumes have perhaps ensued. Should this Western technology be considered progressive in the history of the Dogon people? If spiritual energy accumulates within esoteric rites and fetishes, then exposing sacred acts and objects, projecting them into the world, may dissipate the spirit that holds a community together.

Opening the Screen's Dimensions

Such moral questions are intensified by the scale of cinematic projection. In concert with Godard on this topic, Chris Marker is alleged to have said, "It's not a movie unless the people on the screen are larger than those who watch it." Marker has crafted museum installations using monitors and has produced DVDs for computer; so his remark does not establish a hierarchy. But it does establish a distinction: the magnitude of the experience is a function of the size of the screen. The birth of cinema conventionally dates from the first public screening at the Grand Café, December 27, 1895, not the moment Thomas Edison first stood up to the pedestal he had built to allow one viewer at a time to look

down onto a small rectangular screen. Small screens have again become an alternative, but Rouch's trance images could scarcely attain their effect if watched on a standard TV or an i-phone.

Sheer scale in two dimensions does not fully account for the power of cinematic projection. In exceptional moments the flat screen gives onto a third dimension, experienced as depth or as time. Rouch, to pursue his radical project, slices into the membrane that separates one level of reality from another, potentially unsettling the world of his subjects and his spectators.[7] He risked dissipating the value of the Sigui rites by exposing the sacred escape through the membrane that concentrates the culture's secrets within a hermetic sphere. After passing through the projector's lens onto a screen in Europe or the USA some years later, the spiritual force of those rites may escape like air from a tire. With *Les Maîtres fous*, he risked not dissipation but its opposite: What else is trance than a tumble through a rabbit hole into stupefying concentration, into an utterly different state, without the assurance of safe return? In both cases, images become projectiles that tear a hole in the screen through which passes tremendous power from another zone.

All the arts involve an economy of shifting levels, but none so visibly as does cinema, since it transports the spectator from one state to another, often by abrupt jumps. Just going to the movies represents a dramatic shift unavailable to the TV viewer at home. The following anecdote reported by the *International Herald* may serve as our allegory:

> Sept. 8 2004: Police in Paris have discovered a fully equipped cinema in a large and previously uncharted cavern underneath the capital's chic 16th arrondissement. Officers admit they are at a loss to know who built or used one of Paris' most intriguing recent discoveries. Some officers stumbled upon the complex during a training exercise beneath the Palais de Chaillot. After entering the network through a drain next to the Trocadero, the officers came across a tarpaulin marked: "Building Site, No Access." Behind that a tunnel held a desk and a closed-circuit TV camera set to automatically record images of anyone passing. The mechanism also

> triggered a tape of dogs barking, "clearly designed to frighten people off." Further along, the tunnel opened into a vast 400 square meter cave some 18 meters underground, "like an underground amphitheater with terraces cut into the rock and chairs." There the police found a full-size cinema screen, projection equipment and a wide variety of films including 1950s film noir classics and more recent thrillers.

This bizarre discovery exposes the subterranean psychological and political mechanism of cinema projection. Descending beneath the hubbub of daily business and traffic, the intrepid spectator passes through a doorway, box office, vestibule, and sometimes a velvet curtain toward a guarded zone, where ancient visions (noirs, thrillers) are conjured out of the darkness. "I would say of the cinema," wrote Bazin, "that it is the little flashlight of the usher taking us to the night of our waking dream the diffuse space of which surrounds the screen." Chris Marker might have hollowed out this cavern in the bowels of Paris for the setting of *La Jetée* (1962). In that film, unable to subsist on the city's contaminated surface, survivors have regrouped underground to plan a future. They choose a "volunteer" endowed with a strong imagination, and project him into different time zones to search for a solution that might rescue the doomed present.

La Jetée enacts that miraculous operation that Slavoj Zizek finds in virtually every film that interests him: When the characters who are pitted against one another seem inextricably locked into their situation, or when the camera appears to have exhausted the world laid out in the textual system, or when the genre seems intent to repeat itself in an endless loop, then some force may come to tear through the screen and allow a further layer of reality to emerge from beyond it. In the classical cinema, this deeper layer often re-elaborated the terms of the drama, but generally in succession, the way Oz reconstitutes Kansas or a dream scene fades in and out, interrupting the "real" story with something from a character's imagination. In the modern cinema such layers often coexist as virtual images of one another – "indiscernibly," as

Deleuze put it. Zizek celebrates exceptional films for the way certain of their scenes violently slit the fabric of the textual system, then cleverly stitch it together, often constructing an interior frame to retain or increase the energy produced under pressure, not allowing it to leak away. His sharpest example is taken from a film whose title proposes a conundrum, *The Double Life of Veronique* (*La Double Vie de Véronique/Podwójne życie Weroniki*, 1991). Krzysztof Kieślowski visualizes the film's theme of doubleness in a beautiful scene: the Polish singer, while seated in a train, peers at the passing landscape first through the distorted glass of the train car's window, then through a glass ball she holds up to invert the visual field. Narratively and pictorially, Kieślowski has introduced and held in place a world larger than any one story or any single perspective, and he has done so through the constricted frame, the interface, of a tiny glass ball.

Such interior interfaces that multiply states can be found in popular cinema as well. A well-known example that troubled many viewers comes from *American Beauty* (1999), when its pervasive suburban landscape was interrupted by an exceedingly long take of a plastic bag dancing uselessly in the wind. This shot came via a videocassette inserted into a player, which made the TV screen in the middle-class home open onto a different world altogether, with its own temporality, rendered in its own medium (black and white video). A videocassette likewise disrupts the flow of a film that has been mistreated throughout this "manifesto," *Amélie*. A bizarrely clothed TV set sits like a piece of sculpture in the basement apartment of the reclusive painter Dufayal, like an opaque blind spot. However, thanks to Amélie, a cassette mysteriously shows up in his room, lighting up the screen to display the only free images in the entire movie: an infant swimming underwater, a blues singer, a peg-legged black man doing a soft shoe. Did Jeunet introduce these germs of video to contaminate with raw footage the artificial glow of health his images otherwise are made up to convey, or did he wish to set off the other frame in the basement, the dominating picture of Renoir's "The Boating Party" that Dufayal aims to master?[8]

Deleuze characterizes the modern cinema *in toto* by identifying the co-presence of alternatives (why not call them "virtual reality states") in milestone works chiefly produced after World War II. The prime example we have repeatedly encountered is the one that Jacques Rivette believed to have officially inaugurated cinematic modernism, *Voyage to Italy*. There, Rossellini exposed his flat characters to strata beneath the surface of the Neopolitan landscape. At the "little Vesuvius," Katherine (Ingrid Bergman) is mystified and delighted when she puffs her cigarette into a hole and causes a fog of smoke to rise from beneath the entire field around her. On other occasions, however, she would rather not confront any world beyond her car's windshield. In the museum where muscular Roman statues come so alive, Katherine turns away. In the catacombs where the bones of the dead coexist with Neopolitan citizens, she turns away. Finally, she turns away in the pain of full recognition from the remains of a couple unearthed at the archeological dig in Pompeii, where 1900 years ago they were caught in their embrace by the flash of the volcano that fixed them forever like a photograph, whose image develops only now before her eyes. The film ends on some sort of "miracle," as a flood of grace or love bubbles through from another level to heal a crippled marriage, if only for a time.

My own realization of the sensibility of cinematic modernism came in 1966 with *Blow Up*. In that film, Michelangelo Antonioni effectively poked holes in the screen using the sharp instrument of another medium, photography. The prints of photos snapped off in a park that David Hemmings develops and then strings up to dry are like apertures through which his imagination, and ours, run wild with doubts and alternate scenarios. Arrested by their stillness, particularly after the rambunctious movement and color of the previous sequence with his teenage models, we peer with him through what is a sequence of black and white rectangles – photos, images, blotches – and feel a cold wind blown from some space beyond the screen. *Blow Up* announces that a photograph, just like a painting or a television monitor, set within the movie's primary frame, can instantly suffuse the screen with material

Projecting photography. *Blow Up.*

belonging to a different level of "reality" altogether. The character and the spectator project their moral feelings into these interior frames, these interfaces, believing that the world outside projected something partly unseen onto the photos we are looking at. Thus does cinema's "impurity" conspire with its apparatus: heterogeneous elements interact within a single frame, while different sorts of frames open within the master frame.

Frame as Threshold

To imagine the screen as porous, as I have done above, allows us to imagine the frame of the screen in three rather than two dimensions, like a foyer one passes through on the way not to the picture, but to *picturing* what is not fully there. The French word for shot, "*plan*," encourages this conceit, coming from theater where it refers to the fore, middle, or rear plane of the stage. Sometimes the audience view of action in the background is occluded by a

screen (this word again comes from the French, *ecran*, originally an opaque surface used as a shield). Just as directors of plays sometimes remove the screen to dramatically surprise the audience, so filmmakers, as we have just seen, may tear the screen to reveal another level of "reality" beyond. With the French term in mind, successive *plans* in a film can be thought to comprise a perceptual cone, or what Bazin called – using the precise geometrical designation – a parallelepiped. The camera's viewfinder, homothetic with the screen, a plane of the same shape, gives onto multiple *plans* (more or less distant shots), to create a perceptual volume. Engaged with a film, the audience's imagination, cued by what they see, moves through the threshold of the frame into this volume.

A fetching allegory of cinema's projective powers was made by Moshen Makmahlbof in 1992, as a response to the demystification brought about by digital technology. His *Once Upon a Time, Cinema* (*Nasserddin Shah, Actor-e Cinema*) recreates the introduction of the *cinématographe* to Persia in the first years of the twentieth century. A charming Chaplinesque hero must convince the sultan of the value of this magical technology, succeeding thanks to the greater charms of his star – his fiancée – with whom the sultan falls utterly in love. In fact, he falls for her image and is determined to have her. He gets his chance when somehow she falls through the frameline in the melodramatic film-within-the film, just as she is let go by the villain while dangling over a cliff, landing in the next shot in the very room where the sultan is ogling her through the peephole of a giant kinetoscope. Surprised, then aroused, he chases her until she passes right into the peephole and back onto the screen, her proper ontological position as image.

At once filmmaker and projectionist, the hero might be one of the *opérateurs* whom the Lumière brothers sent around the world with their *cinématographe*. This is the machine that Henri Bergson notoriously dismissed in his 1908 *Creative Evolution*, a hasty judgment that Gilles Deleuze excuses in noting that Bergson's confusion stemmed from having equated recording and projection, something he was liable to do because the original apparatus in fact did both.[9]

In his own books, Deleuze is concerned not at all with the *cinématographe* but only with the cinema; in fact, with what he forthrightly calls "the essence of cinema," a form of moving pictures constituted by shots in which the pictured view, separate from the projector's view, is guided by an overall design, termed montage. There were two limitations to the *cinématographe*:

> On the one hand, the viewpoint [*prise de vue*] was fixed, the shot was therefore spatial and strictly immobile; on the other hand, the apparatus for shooting [*appareil de prise de vue*] was combined with the apparatus for projection, endowed with a uniform abstract time. The evolution of the cinema, the conquest of its own essence or novelty, was to take place through montage, the mobile camera and the emancipation of the view point which became separate from projection.[10]

Deleuze goes on to define the elemental processes of cinema as the frame and the cut, with the latter continually liberating the image from the former as each film seeks its path toward a developing Whole. In his delightful movie, Makmahlbof dramatizes these essential operations when he has the villain of the film-within-the-film cut the rope from which dangles the heroine, using a knife that might as well be a guillotine film splicer. She then falls through the frame into the succeeding shot, which is bounded by a further frame. This double operation of framing, then cutting, would characterize cinema – would constitute its essence, Deleuze believed – from the time of its liberation from the *cinématographe* around 1908 right up to his own day.

Did he realize that right then as he described things in 1985, cinema was mutating from within, invaded by digital processes in production, then blown into fragments by videotape distribution and small screen exhibition? During the "cinematographic epistème" (1908–85), which prophets of the digital like Siegfried Zelinski want to put in its place but which cinephiles celebrate or mourn, the big screen was the site of a perpetual liberation from limitation. Deleuze's corpus of examples, from Griffith to Godard, play out again and again a struggle of images, alive with the

plenitude of time, bursting through the strictures of space. Deleuze was congenitally allergic to the frame; after all, it is a metonymy for the "territorialization" he abhorred, implying borders, constraint, and rectilinearity. Moreover, it was the founding element of the classical view of cinema that someone like Rudolf Arnheim immediately linked to the aesthetics of drawing and painting.[11]

Nothing could be further from Deleuze's hopes for cinema. Classical theory makes the frame an inflexible regulator. It orders heterogeneous elements, divides what is on screen from what is off, and coordinates everything through the geometry of what we call, in fact, its "coordinates." This power to constitute *what* is seen and *how* it is seen, even if variable in practice (from saturation to rarefaction, from geometric design to lax naturalness[12]) accords the screen an authority and discipline that it was the work of Deleuze's favorite films and of his books to challenge. Effectively, the frame rules time by orchestrating its flows into satisfying kinetic patterns, maintaining the representational order, and holding the spectator – to echo Stephen Heath – "on screen in frame."[13] Deleuze's second volume, *L'Image-temps*, asserts the breakdown of this logic and the emergence of other logics instituted by the creation of pure audiovisual events, not recuperable by narrative or character psychology. *L'Image-temps* would seem to require a different conception of the screen, but Deleuze had difficulty coming up with suitable terminology for the spatial effects of time in its pure form.

More constraining even than the painting analogy is the role that the frame plays in the psychoanalytic and semiotic turn of French film theory during the 1970s. Heath provides the clearest account of this era's concerns in his essay on suture.[14] According to the underlying "suture scenario," the viewer, lured by what the luminous screen seems to hold, anticipates a total view and rapt engagement with revealed being, but is stopped short by the frame, an *actual* limit and a perpetual *reminder* of limits. At once goading and frustrating the desire to see, the frame parsimoniously boxes in a mere representation tied to a perspective. Confronted by this rebuff, the imagination demands additional representations – indeed,

a whole suite of views stitched together into a large tissue or text within which, crucially, the spectator is also glad to be included. In this way, a complex textual fabric – the result of composition, editing, and the arrangement of points of view – compensates for the loss of that initial pristine, infinitely expansive vision. Thus the satisfied viewer becomes positioned as the subject of ideology.

To "suture theorists," the frame disciplines the extravagant imagination and deflates the epiphanic version of cinematic potential whose deepest source they once hastily attributed to André Bazin. True, Bazin called the frame a piece of masking;[15] it trains our attention on that which may lurk just out of view, promising revelations beyond what can be signified on screen.[16] As for the screen itself, Bazin applauded its widening into CinemaScope.[17] He urged the spectator to *experience* space rather than merely *read* its significance ("The cinema's ultimate aim should not be so much to mean as to reveal."). As a critic, he ever sought to look through the screen and inhabit the space put before him by the filmmaker. Hence his appreciation of Renoir and Welles, two completely different cinéastes who equally tax the perceptual abilities of the viewer. Renoir's lateral vision solicits the out-of-frame; whereas the receding compositions of Orson Welles privilege the nearest and furthest planes in the image.

These and other stylistic reflexes amount to "filters," Bazin's simile that in English supplements the standard notion of the screen. We say that a window screen filters out insects while letting air pass through. For Bazin, the director's *conscience* "filters," without altering, the stream of facts in the audiovisual milieu.[18] The filmmaker chooses subject, distance, and angle in such a consistent way that certain streams of information are filtered from the overabundance that comprises the three-dimensional audiovisual environment. Realist filmmakers tend to use wider mesh screens, abstract filmmakers very narrow meshes, but they both actively aim to make visible something that emerges from the superflux of the universe, only part of which registers itself on celluloid. Contrast this notion of the screen to Lev Manovich's more aggressive one. His filmmaker uses the frame like a plow to shove

clutter to the side, and thinks of the screen as does an athlete who "sets a screen" to block unwanted players out of the action.[19]

This power of the *screen* to bring apparently random molecular motion into the unity of "something seen" distinguishes it from the *frame* that hems in the elements it surrounds. Deleuze writes in *The Fold*:

> Chaos does not exist; it is an abstraction because it is inseparable from a screen that makes something—something rather than nothing—emerge from it. Chaos would be a pure *Many* [English in the original], a purely disjunctive diversity, while the something is a *One* [also in English]. How can the Many become the One? A great screen has to be placed in between them. Like a formless elastic membrane [or] an electromagnetic field . . . the screen makes something issue from chaos.[20]

As one astute commentary on this passage has it: "'What is cinema?' Neither a window nor a frame, cinema is movement within a monad, chaos on a screen."[21]

Deleuze's mesh-screen is inserted in three-dimensional space, interposed strategically within the "chaotic multiplicity" of micro-molecular motion. The other models mentioned here have been two-dimensional, whether Arnheim's centripetal frame, Bazin's centrifugal masking, or Heath's semiotic suture, which makes a patchwork of a canvas that unrolls horizontally like a scroll. However, rips in the text can expose layers behind the flat screen, where something from another dimension forces its way through a gap to flood the established view with new significance. Imagine the spectator, like the sultan in *Once Upon a Time, Cinema*, passing through a peephole to gain access to what is glimpsed beyond. The cinema, far more than the photograph, gives onto a perceptual volume.[22]

The screen, then, is a threshold through which the viewer (the view-*finder*) passes on the way to visual experience. The threshold adds a third dimension to the frame, taken either as depth or as time. As an architectural feature, the threshold stands in

permanent relation to the spaces that lie on its either side; but since it effectively allows heterogeneous spaces to communicate, and since it functions as a passage from one to the other, the threshold implies movement in a way neither a frame nor a window quite does. We enter films through a suite of thresholds, beginning with the theater décor and the lobby with its posters, then passing through the curtain that issues into the auditorium. We find our seats in the half-light while the ads and trailers gradually attract and hold our vision on the screen. The room darkens fully and the masking is adjusted as the film begins; even here, we must wade through the studio logo, the credits, and a suite of textual preliminaries that narrative theory terms, precisely, "framing devices." These are the thresholds of cinema through which we pass on the way to what the screen does and does not hold.

This expanded three-dimensional frame of cinema differentiates it from the TV monitor, which works by a succession of instant recognitions put together in montage. The TV monitor displays images, whereas the screen leads us toward that which lies beyond the immediately visible. This so struck the Surrealists that it may have suggested some key terms of that movement to its founders.[23] Robert Desnos, André Breton, Salvador Dalí, and especially Max Ernst described in detail the thrill that the cinema delivers as it beckons the viewer to pass through the apertures that the screen so often contains, not to mention the great aperture that the screen itself is. What realities lie beyond? And what desires does it encourage us to project onto it? Addicted to Mack Sennett's slapstick street comedies and to the serials of Louis Feuillade that turned Paris into an occult drama of innocence and evil, Surrealists looked on cinema as modernity's escape hatch from the flat routine of twentieth century industrialized life and death.

Marcel Duchamp condensed this new kind of experience in his droll rotorelief movie, *Anémic Cinéma* in 1924, the same year he more or less completed "The Large Glass," which advances even more suggestively an idea of cinema. Representing the lure of perceptual enticements and frustrations, this piece caused Duchamp to remark: "I thought of the idea of a projection, of an invisible

fourth dimension . . . 'The Bride' in the 'Large Glass' was based on this, as if it were the projection of a four-dimensional object. I called 'The Bride' a 'delay in glass.'"[24] One could say that Duchamp was the first to think of framing cinema within the walls of the museum. Just as films have often inserted paintings within their more encompassing frames, so museums have learned to fight back, burying cinema in dedicated screening rooms or, more often, within a variety of gallery spaces where films unroll in loops or appear on monitors that sometimes stand alone, sometimes are stacked in series, and sometimes play in dialogue with still images, sculptures, and scripted words. Those who come upon these images no longer comprise an audience but are in every sense museum "visitors," often solitary ones. By putting cinema's distinctively governed screen experience on display, often ironically, the museum etches it ever more deeply.

In the postmodern period, artists have dismantled the film frame, letting the cinematic lifeblood hemorrhage into a range of multimedia states named by Raymond Bellour "Entr'Images." He, along with Jacques Aumont, Philippe Dubois, and Luc Vancherie, have tracked the itinerary of two generations of visual artists who have carted their images out of the cinema.[25] Peter Greenaway, for example, no longer settles for cramming incongruous artforms within the wide-screen of such films as *Prospero's Books* (1991) and *A Zed & Two Noughts* (1985). Giving new definition to "expanded cinema," his moving pictures take their place in installations alongside paintings and sculptures. Insisting on the next step, Greenaway has even projected images around city centers (Geneva, Barcelona), framing views here and there for citizens to glimpse in their daily perambulations. Surrealist in inspiration, this practice releases the public from the prison of the museum, not to mention the movie theater, so that they can encounters images haphazardly as they meander through their own public spaces.

If the museum has officially kidnapped the structure of the film experience so as to contain it for the delectation of its own public, the computer has done something analogous for private users. Not only do individuals watch films on PCs in their own

fashion, they watch them on one window among several that may be running simultaneously (including those that hold email messages, the Internet database entry on the film, personal notes, a favorite blog, and the current weather). Cinema constitutes just one kind of software content available to the powerful Windows operating system and the all-encompassing PC hardware. Called up "on demand" or via "Youtube," a movie appears on a "flat panel," where as many windows are displayed as the user chooses, then shuffles, moving them around like cards in a game of solitaire. "Monitor" and "display" seem more apt terms than "screen" to designate the visual experience that computers deliver.

This would be the assessment of Masaki Kondo, who, in the tradition of Marshall McLuhan, distinguishes each medium by analogizing its apparatus. Cinema he describes as a form of *camera obscura*, an optical organ capacious enough to contain a human being who, standing within it, traces the images formed by the world on its back wall, its retina.[26] Spectators sit within this volume, like the prisoners in Plato's cave, staring ahead at reflected images that they in turn reflect upon. This echo-effect and resonance is redoubled in cinema, Kondo suggests, thanks to the delay from the moment of film capture to the moment of image projection, and the displacement from the physical world where the capture took place to the *salle du cinéma*. How different, he writes, is the cinema experience from that of television, whose unreflecting monitor is as thin as a single sheet of molecules, the image pasted on it. Moreover, the monitor connects the viewer to the image in real time with no delay. Video games require instant feedback. As for television, the nightly news, the weather channel, and talk shows all address us directly in the present tense. This curiously recalls the Lumière *cinématographe*, which, based on a nineteenth century model of "attractions," guided the spectator's astonishment through the direct address of the fairground barker or illusionist.[27] In contrast, as Malraux pointed out in his "Sketch," and Bazin echoed, cinema's modernism is modeled on that of the novel, on its obliquity and density, on its extra dimension of volume and temporality. The computer monitor of the

In the threshold. *Letter from an Unknown Woman.*

twenty-first century, just like the *cinématographe* of the nineteenth, presents the viewer with the present, no matter what is displayed there. Cinema, the medium that ruled the century in between these, pulls the viewer into another world and an encounter with something past and just out of reach.

No critic since Bazin better understood this pull that the cinema can exert than Serge Daney. Giving up the editorship of *Cahiers du cinéma* to become a television critic, he found himself in a position to identify what might be expected from both media. In the caustic review of Jean-Jacques Annaud's *The Lover* that I singled out in the first chapter, Daney worried that films had begun promoting the "thin image" made with the television public in mind, throwing over cinema's elastic temporality.[28]

> Annaud doesn't know that there are things which you see without really seeing them, and others which stare you in the face but don't

> reflect any real experience; that there are moments when you must not make too much noise; that there are things which are omnipresent but insignificant, and others which are absent but powerful; that there are collective lies and partial truths—in short, that there are experiences which cinema sometimes finds hard to approach (yet its dignity lies in the attempt).

Cinema's dignity lies in the expectations it arouses, in the perceptual labor it requires, and even in its insufficiency in the face of that which defies ready representation. Annaud's film, Daney complained, aims to present a beautiful image at every moment. In doing so it abandons its subject, as well as the drama of discovering that subject, when, as in genuine cinema, the viewer is pulled from one image to its successor in search of something the screen cannot hold. Though taken from a novel by Marguerite Duras, haunted by the past, *The Lover* displays itself like a poster. Utterly exhibitionist, it has nothing to hide and thus nothing more to give than what we see.

This theme of visual search, a theme preeminent in Bazin, has made certain films the darling of critics who follow in his tradition, those who relish being enticed through a passage toward a view of what may be ultimately unviewable. Lisa's voice in Max Ophuls' *Letter from an Unknown Woman* draws the spectator into the past and toward her confrontation with the ineffable, and finally with death. In an emblematic moment early on, she is literally aroused from her bed (site of sexual fantasy) to cross the threshold of her apartment, slipping past the censor (her mother) on her way to the threshold of Stefan's apartment. She reaches up to open the transom, then stares off screen, where Stefan must be focused on his music. He will later seduce Lisa by telling her that when he plays, he imagines her within his piano. Since his music is what roused her like a sleepwalker to cross over toward him, can we not say that she is looking for herself, invisible within those strains? Stephen Heath compared this paradox to that of a scene in Oshima's *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976), when serving women peer through scrims into the room where the lovers burrow into each

other, pass into each other through their orifices, on the way toward what is finally completely unviewable, the place of pleasure.[29]

Closer to our own day, Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000) became a fetish film when it elaborately concealed the void at its center. The spectator does not identify with the couple whose love is continually deferred so much as with the camera which searches for marks, then for traces, of feeling. Passing like a voyeur amidst staircases, half-open doorways, and alluring corridors, the camera responds to hints and whispers, moving ever inward, framing spaces that might be filled with embraces were the characters and their feelings properly aligned. All this, perhaps all cinema, is condensed in the epilogue at Angkor Wat, where the hero whispers his longing into a crevice, the film's (and the lovers') holy tabernacle. A wad of earth seals this hole to stop up desire. As the camera then tracks through the temple's passages and columns, we can almost hear echoes of forlorn whispers coming down from eight centuries of pilgrimage and prayer, eight centuries of human feeling raised to evanescent sublimity in this sacred but empty site. Angkor Wat is like a movie theater in which, above which, and behind which hovers deferred romance. If the camera, for all its incessant tracking, could only burrow into that crevice in the ancient wall, exposing desire once and for all! At such a moment in such a place, feeling turns back onto itself, having failed to become attached to a proper object. Is this not the structure of nostalgia, the emotion proper to cinephilia? The tracking shot in a mise en scène of interior framings has become the very figure of cinephilia. As in *Last Year at Marienbad* (*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, Resnais, 1961), the spectator, passing through frames into further frames, experiences in infinite regress, a sublime vertigo, falling into nothing but the feeling that such passage engenders.

Writing out of the Frame

Ophuls, Resnais, and Wong Kar-Wai arrange a mise en abyme out of the most evanescent subject matter, frustrated desire. Naturally,

they figure prominently in a study of the elements and structures of cinema. But their model of the film experience applies generally to all films that are in search of a subject difficult to frame. Not only in the key of romance or nostalgia, but in any key whatever (be it magical, comic, skeptical, ironic), to go *to* the cinema means to go *with* the film, meeting its world projection with projections of our own. The screen, porous yet in the grip of the frame, is the unstable meeting place on which are projected fragments of unlimited worlds from both directions. An array of sounds and images (albeit captured, organized, and designed for the occasion) mixes and fuses with the feelings and ideas brought to it from spectators who come in from the street.

Projection stands at the open end of a cinematographic process that begins with framing. We say that a view, a situation, a story, or an argument is framed when pertinent elements are taken together as a set, so that the positions and functions of all elements mutually determine one another in relation to the whole. A world then settles onto the screen and unfolds according to the design of its emplotment. Projection then breaks out of the frame, and in two senses. On one side, as exemplified already, the flat screen can be invaded by elements coming from behind or beyond it, from a third dimension, as it were. On the other side, the viewer projects himself or herself toward the screen, taking the film beyond its original context into frameworks unforeseen by its maker.

Characterized this way, as the disruption of the frame and the elaboration of vision, cinematic projection operates quite the way Paul Ricoeur describes metaphor. When a discourse laid out in one language domain is surprised by a bold and impertinent expression, then the vocabulary and perspective of another domain suddenly washes over the first, bringing new aspects of the subject into view. The first few times a tuba's sound was called "heavy," for instance, a spectrum of "touch" terms ranged across the domain of musical instruments, thickening our perception of sound by according them feeling (soft, brittle, etc.) . . . at least until the shock of the disparity wore down into a cliché. Similarly,

once we are struck by a cinematic "figure" (the stilling of the image here and there in *Jules and Jim*, for instance, or that same film's opposition of circular and triangular compositions), the screen opens onto a new level of significance, demanding an effort of interpretation to flesh out a design newly visible in the subject.

For Ricoeur, projection is both the elaboration of the text's subject, as well as the "application" of its perceived significance to the world one lives in. In the cinema, this double project occurs at the site of screen. For it is here that two projections come into focus and fuse; the one filtered by the auteur and the one filled in by the spectator. Cinema is a "project" taking place inside the threshold of the screen.

Let me pull back from the threshold that each film can become, to the threshold that the cinema itself comprises, as a place looking back to the nineteenth century and forward into the twenty-first, with one leg in each. And let me bring back for a final time: "The *Cahiers* axiom is this: that the cinema has a rapport with the real, and that the real is not what is represented. And that's final." Serge Daney understood the "project" of cinema to be bound up with and completed by writing. In the interview that opens his collected works, he says directly: "It's quite simple—the cinema loved by the *Cahiers*—from the beginning—is a CINEMA HAUNTED BY WRITING. This is the key which makes it possible to understand the successive tastes and choices . . . the best French filmmakers have always been—at the same time—writers (Renoir, Cocteau, Pagnol, Guitry, Epstein)." Recent editor Emmanuel Burdeau goes further: Bazin's disciples who became famous filmmakers – Rohmer and Godard (he might have added Truffaut) – were would-be writers obsessed with literature. Burdeau is sure that the relation of cinema to writing defines the *Cahiers* line even more than its devotion to "mise en scène."[30]

Bazin died having just glimpsed the radical confrontation of cinema to writing that developed around the "Left Bank group," at whose core were his friends Chris Marker and Alain Resnais. He had already assigned a privileged place in the modern cinema to

what he was happy to call their film "essays" (*Toute la Mémoire du monde*, *Night and Fog*), which weave a highly literary off-screen narration with cerebral camera movements. Marker moved fluidly from his articles in *Esprit* and the "Commentaires" he published at Editions du Seuil, that combine photographs and text, to a film like *Lettre de Sibérie* (Marker, 1957), which Bazin reviewed so warmly two weeks before he died. As for Resnais, he would change the face of cinema just months after Bazin's death with *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and then again with *Last Year at Marienbad*, both films confounding writing and filmmaking in what can only be termed a theoretical adventure in expanded *écriture*. Marguerite Duras and Alain Robbe-Grillet, who supplied the texts spoken in these, soon picked up the camera themselves and began directing films. They were supported by the increased prestige of film in universities and in the journals that these spawned.

A key figure in the transition from ciné-club to university film culture was Marie-Claire Ropars, who succeeded Bazin at the journal *Esprit* after 1958. Her first two books establish the literary problematic of cinema, titled as they are *L'Ecran de la mémoire* and *De la Littérature au cinéma*. She would soon align herself with the theories of Jacques Derrida, consecrating book-length analyses to Resnais' *Muriel* and, in her most powerful treatise, *Le Texte divisé*, to Duras's *India Song*. Godard may have closed this circle when he asked Duras to play herself in *Slow Motion* (*Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, 1980). His goal? To picture authenticity and to give an image to writing.

"Cinema as *écriture*" is a notion rooted in Astruc's 1948 essay on "the camera-pen," which suggests the integral place of critical writing as the necessary supplement to any film that has a future. Criticism may be provoked by images, but it also provokes them in return as it tries to develop the contours of a reality – a subject matter – which those images are traces of. And so from first to last, from script or scribbled idea to critical elaboration, writing works hand in hand with images in a bipolar practice by which cinema, impure from the outset, aims to access, expose, and elaborate every sort of subject matter, including those that were once or are

still unimaginable, because they belong more to "matter" than to the human "subject."

In Bazin's day, the adult arts of fiction, theater, and painting provided subject matter that helped a very juvenile cinema mature. Today, having attained its status in university curricula, and on the Arts pages of newspapers and cultural journals, cinema's vitality, its necessary impurity now comes through contact with comic books, television, popular music, video games, and computer culture. It will not be in matching popular culture that cinema can retain the vitality and weight it has worked to achieve as it has evolved over a century; nor should it retreat to the haven of the cinematheque or specialized art theater (although these conserve an enormous capital of great films that fund the cinema's investment in whatever future it makes). Rather, cinema must press forward into the new century, by taking into itself the subject matter that surrounds it, increasingly a new media culture. The impure films that result will no doubt comprise a different cinema from the one we have known, but it will be a cinema worthy of its past, to the extent that it maintains what might best be termed the cinematic ethos. An attitude, rather than a doctrine, is what André Bazin passed down, an attitude of curiosity, spontaneity, and responsiveness to a reality conceived of as indefinitely enigmatic and worthy of our care. The best filmmakers meet the best critics at the threshold of the screen, where images take charge but only so as to lead beyond themselves.

Notes

1. Régis Debray, *Vie et Mort de l'image* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), chs 8, 10, and 11.
2. Garrett Stewart, *Framed Time* (University of Chicago Press, 2007), has identified examples of post-filmic cinema in Hollywood and Europe since the 1990s, each operating on the principle that the image is not a photograph and can be changed (morphed) internally.

3. Cited by Timothy Murray, "Debased Projection and Cyberspatial Ping: Chris Marker's Digital Screen," *Parachute*, 113 (2004), p. 92. Murray tracks this remark to Chris Marker's "Immemory."
4. See Seung-hoon Jeong, "The Interface in Film Theory," Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2010.
5. The Lumières designed their apparatus to perform both operations. Subjects who stood in front of the *cinématographe*, framed to be recorded, would, a few days later, look away from it toward a screen on which they could see their likenesses projected.
6. Ousmane Sembène remained ornery to the end, objecting to the way Rouch put Africans under his microscope like insects.
7. As much a Surrealist as ethnographer, Rouch reminds us of Buñuel slicing the eye of the woman/donkey to open *Un Chien andalou* (1929).
8. Paintings shown in movies need not always connote domesticated representations in this way. In the most striking scene of *The Marquise of O* (1976), Eric Rohmer mimics a disturbing painting by Fuseli, "The Nightmare (Incubus)," halting the film's trajectory and raising its concerns to a higher power. This painting overdetermines the narrative, flooding it with a waterfall of significance that drops from an eighteenth century plateau that we hadn't imagined was in range.
9. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 3.
10. The French original from *Cinéma 1: l'image-mouvement* (p. 12) is as follows: D'une part la prise de vue était fixe, le plan était donc spatial et formellement immobile; d'autre part l'appareil de prise de vue était confondu avec l'appareil de projection, doué d'un temps uniforme abstrait. L'évolution du cinéma, la conquête de sa propre essence ou nouveauté, se fera par le montage, la caméra mobilé, et l'émancipation de la prise de vue qui se sépare de la projection."
11. Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), pp. 9–14 and 158–9. Many pertinent observations relating cinema to painting and graphic art are found in his later volume, *Art and Visual Perception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).
12. Deleuze, *Cinéma 1*, pp. 24–6.
13. Stephen Heath, "On Screen, In Frame: Film and Ideology," in *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981).
14. Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, ch. 3, pp. 76–112.

15. André Bazin, "Théâtre et Cinéma," in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1981), p. 160. Translated in *What is Cinema? I*, p. 103.
16. Frequently citing Bazin as well as suture theorist Jean-Pierre Oudart, Pascal Bonitzer aptly titled his hymn to modern cinema *Décadrages* (Paris: Editions *Cahiers du cinéma*, 1985).
17. André Bazin, "Le Cinémascope: fin du montage," in *Cahiers du cinéma*, 31 (1954), p. 43, and "Le Cinémascope, Sauvera-t-il le cinéma," in *Esprit*, 43 (Oct.–Nov. 1953).
18. André Bazin, "Défense de Rossellini," in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, pp. 351–2. Translated in *What is Cinema? vol. II*, p. 98.
19. Lev Manovich, *Language of New Media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), p. 100. Manovich treats the cinema screen as a transitional device overtaken by the "windows of computers" on which multiple frames can coexist.
20. Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minn. Press, 1993), p. 76, translated by Tom Conley from *Le Pli* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1988), pp. 103–4. The key term for us, "Screen," is not *écran* in French, but *crible*, which might otherwise be translated as "sieve." Conley's selection of "screen" suits me better of course. The original reads: "Le chaos n'existe pas, c'est une abstraction, parce qu'il est inséparable d'un crible qui en fair sortir quelque chose (quelque chose plutôt que rien). Le chaos serait un pur *Many*, pure diversité disjonctive, tandis que le quelque chose est un *One* . . . Comment le Many devient-il un One? Il faut qu'un grand crible intervienne."
21. James Tweedie, "Neobaroque Cinema in Europe since 1975," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 2002.
22. The screen is a term and a device used in other media too, of course. As a partition on a theater stage, it strategically blocks the view of what hides in a deeper plane until the moment it is dramatically revealed. As for computers, the words "portal" and "windows" imply a dimension of depth to the flat panel on which everything is laid out.
23. Haim Finkelstein, *The Screen in Surrealist Art and Thought* (London: Ashgate Press, 2008).
24. Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Da Capo, 1987).
25. Raymond Bellour, *Entre-images* (Paris: La Difference, 1990).

26. Masaki Kondo, "The Intersection of Mi (Me-Body) and Tai (You-Body) in Photography," *Iconics*, 1 (1987), p. 5; see also his "The Impersonalization of the Self in the Image Society," *Iris*, no. 16 (1993), p. 38.
27. See, among others, Tom Gunning's famous essay, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde"; in Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (eds.), *Early Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1989).
28. Serge Daney, "Falling out of Love," *Sight and Sound* (July 1992), pp. 14–16.
29. Stephen Heath, "The Question Oshima," in *Questions of Cinema*, pp. 145–64.
30. Emmanuel Burdeau, "Interview" with Dudley Andrew, *Framework*, 50 (2009).

Chapter 4

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SUBJECTS OF CINEMA

Cinema came to self-consciousness during a 20-year trajectory from *The Rules of the Game* to *The 400 Blows*, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, and *Breathless* (*A Bout de souffle*, Godard, 1960). Rossellini and Bazin served as conduits for this passage, "*passeurs*" Serge Daney would call them. Maturity brought with it not just swaggering brashness but doubts and questions, evident in the title of Bazin's collected works, published at the outset of the New Wave, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*? Reluctant to pin down this first technological art, reluctant even to identify it as an art, or to exclude any of its uses and genres, no matter how mundane or marginal, Bazin kept the cinema an open question – open to the world which in some fashion it always engages. Hence his belief that "modern" cinema was breaking through the confines of the "classic" style thanks to a certain "avant-garde" that he felt had begun to explore new cinematographic terrain in quest of broader worlds to represent. "Classic," "modern," "avant-garde": simplistic and ambiguous these three terms may be, nevertheless they identify the stakes of the game, as well as certain of its rules.

Modern Film: Between Classic and Avant-Garde

Were you to have asked Bazin about the source of the change he could sense under way all around him, he would not in the first instance have pointed to cinematography, mise en scène, acting, or editing; he would have pointed to what he called *le sujet*, subject matter. Like the arrival of puberty, the medium was startled in the mid-1940s to realize it had matured, after face-to-face encounters with challenging topics it could scarcely avoid. It was the complexity of their subjects that had led Renoir and Welles to abandon the rule books of the classical system in *The Rules of the Game* and *Citizen Kane*. Then immediately came warfare around the world. Unsurprisingly, modern warfare demanded modern means of representation. Space expanded, time contracted, and both were graphically wrenched from human control. Just so, and without looking awry, Malraux bore witness to heroic humanism in *Espoir*, among the first of numerous quasi-documentaries that struggled to represent life under the dreadful, murderous conditions that so many people endured (or failed to endure) from 1936 to 1945. Neorealism, Bazin believed, came directly out of the urgency of the war and the resistance, as it adopted aspects of journalism and tough American fiction when standard protocols of scriptwriting, shooting, and editing seemed anemic and completely inadequate to the situation.

Filmmakers were effectively drafted into a new mission by the war. Even Hollywood stalwarts like John Ford and John Huston dared to experiment with rough-and-tumble shooting and editing techniques, to capture or simulate the chaos they volunteered to enter into (*The Battle of Midway*, 1942; *The Battle of San Pietro*, 1945[1]). Once that urgency had passed, however, a crisis of subject matter inevitably followed. What should now be represented on the other side of the war? A generation later, Gilles Deleuze would look back at this moment as the foundation of the "time-image," since "clichés" no longer could hold a film together and characters could not control their destinies in the way they had during cinema's first half-century, many now simply wandering in the

desolate European landscape, serving as nerve centers to register "pure optical and sound events." This realization didn't need to wait for Deleuze's formulation, however, for this crisis was identified right there and then, in the full title of Alexandre Astruc's celebrated manifesto of March 1948: "Pour une nouvelle avant-garde: la caméra-stylo." Much has been written about the "caméra-stylo," especially about cinema's new-found suppleness, putatively capable of the abstractions and personal expressions of written language. But it is the first part of Astruc's title, "a new avant-garde," that begs attention, because it identified a revolution not in film form but in subject matter.

Astruc outlined not so much a revolution as the changing "makeup" of film visible on Parisian screens after 1945 when *Espoir*, *The Rules of the Game*, and *Citizen Kane* were suddenly available, joined by Bresson's *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1945) and Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast* (*La Belle et la bête*, 1946). All were feature films, commercial even, yet dense and uncompromising in comparison with the first generation of sound films. Evidently this new avant-garde was gentler than its bold predecessor from the silent era, when Man Ray, Fernand Léger, Marcel Duchamp, Jean Epstein, Germaine Dulac, and Luis Buñuel travestied or obliterated the rules of cinematic form, in quest not just of notoriety, but of at least "cinq minutes de cinéma pur" (the title of a film from 1926). The avant-garde directors of the sound era were definitely more discrete than their flamboyant predecessors, and yet their ambitions matched those of their historical moment known as the Resistance and the Liberation; hopes for cinema ran as high as hopes for postwar social and political restructuration.

The dual dimensions of the term – one social, the other aesthetic – play out in Bazin's "Défense de l'Avant-Garde," the manifesto that heads the sumptuous catalog created for the "Festival du Film Maudit" staged in Biarritz as a kind of anti-Cannes in the summer of 1949. Bresson's film was showcased there, in a lineup of misunderstood masterpieces that included *L'Atalante* (Vigo, 1934), *Zéro de conduite* (Vigo, 1933), and *The Magnificent*

Ambersons (Welles, 1941). Cocteau ceremoniously presided over this celebration of audacious directors. Among those who trekked from Paris to this Atlantic resort was Bazin's new assistant, the 19-year-old François Truffaut, who for the first time ran into Rohmer's equally young friends, Jean-Luc Godard and Jacques Rivette. Together they would inject vitality and ideas into Paris' fashionable ciné-clubs, like "*Objectif 48*" which, before staging the Biarritz event, had arranged for stunning premieres, like that of *Paisà*, where Rossellini was introduced to an awestruck French public.

As Biarritz aimed to counter the business climate of Cannes, so Cannes aimed to stand up to Hollywood's entertainment genres that were overrunning the continent. This European struggle for an independent, artistically consequential cinema would be waged under the flag of the *auteur*. A critical and legal conundrum since the 1920s, this term came into focus after the war due to the mayhem of the studio structure in Europe and the fallout from the Paramount divestment case in Hollywood, where writers and actors were liberated from their contracts as producers now had to negotiate with "creative personnel," case by case. In France, even before the war, the more ambitious productions had always been proposed by *équipes*, made up of scriptwriters, directors, key actors, and sometimes cameramen and composers. These collective "authors" rented studios rather than obeyed studio heads. Now after the war, with the fault lines of the system cracking wide open,[2] new talents expected to take over or change that system, goaded by upstart critics like Astruc and Bazin. Steeped in film history, they knew that avant-garde films had distinguished themselves as single (signed) works, nonnegotiated and nonnegotiable; and so they resurrected the term in 1948 to support the conception of the feature as the product of a unique creative force. The notion of the avant-garde was therefore a wedge to help auteurs break into full-scale production at a moment when the established system seemed particularly vulnerable.

Thus "the avant-garde" – this strategic, military term – was conscripted by Astruc and Bazin in a campaign that pitted a

"modern" European cinema against the entrenched "classical" system. And it was conscripted against the will of those who should legitimately have controlled its fate, the inheritors of what is now termed "the historical avant-garde" of the 1920s. In Paris, alongside Astruc, Bazin, and the brash cinephiles of *Objectif 49*, one could also hear the manifestos spouted by truly radical groups, most famously the *Lettrists*, led by Isidore Isou and Maurice Lemaître. They were out not to revolutionize feature filmmaking but to destroy it utterly and replace it with freeform anarchic experiments.

Eric Rohmer lashed out against the *Lettrists* in 1952, declaring their subject-less exercises nothing more than futile attempts to resuscitate the provocations of Dada. Not only did they deliberately misunderstand the medium's attributes and possible functions, their notoriety registered mainly in rarefied artistic circles. More than the aesthetic injury he felt they perpetrated against cinema, Rohmer genuinely abhorred the usurpation of the medium by the arts establishment. When the disreputable works by Duchamp, Man Ray, Viking Eggling, and Dalí/Buñuel began to find a home in an institution like the Museum of Modern Art, this was the unmistakable sign that the historical avant-garde had itself been historicized, that it had already been subsumed into the artistic heritage that those anarchists had so desperately wanted to escape or obliterate. Rohmer feared that the avant-garde could take cinema to the brink of being kidnapped by an intellectual class, just the way painting and far too much literature have been. Those arts are now cut off from the natural tasks and publics that were theirs long ago in a classical era.

But postwar cinema still enjoyed just such a classical moment, Rohmer felt, its vitality ensured by the feedback loop between audiences and producers evident at the box office and in reviews.[3] Bazin may have championed an insurgent modern cinema, but like so many others, he respected – even adulated – the classical tradition, particularly that which emanated from Hollywood, where it seemed most natural. Studio productions there, he reasoned, must represent and elaborately develop what a mass culture

finds worth being exposed to and challenged by. Bazin went so far as to compare Hollywood to French classical tragedy, which was so in tune with its audience's concerns and sensibility that fine plays were penned by many authors, not just by Corneille and Racine. Sixty years later, a writer as great as Voltaire would fail in this genre because the audience had evolved and its rapport with the theater had mutated.[4] In a similar way, the Hollywood studios of the 1930s and 1940s were so finely synchronized with the sensibility of their immense public that it was difficult to make an unwatchable film there.

"The Genius of the System," Bazin called the classic cinema; nonetheless, he threw his weight behind those modernists for whom the rationality and decorum of the classical approach should not survive the catastrophe of the war and the obliteration of so much civilization. Certainly not in Europe. While never demeaning Hollywood, Bazin championed Renoir, Welles, Bresson, Cocteau, and Rossellini because their projects fell outside the genre system. Without being formalists, they had to come up with new techniques and different models able to represent whatever deeply concerned them. A significant new public sprouted in Europe, modest in size but ardent and on the lookout for such cineastes and their unconventional subjects. Ciné-clubs, art theaters, and magazines fostered this relation. The postwar existentialist generation listened to jazz and discussed serious films. And so, while Hollywood, far less affected by the war, felt comfortable maintaining a continuity with the 1930s, only occasionally opening the windows of its studios to peer outside, Europe (and Japan, it must be said) made room for something quite new, a modern cinema striving to represent the doubts and challenges of a broken society. Whether shot within actual studios or not (and except for Rossellini the filmmakers mentioned above mainly stayed indoors), modern films were thought to stand up to contemporary concerns and a battered postwar sensibility.

Each month in his journal, the aptly named *Les Temps modernes*, Sartre soberly pressured artists and intellectuals to keep their eyes trained on "situations" in the world, not on their own

fantasies or feelings. The Surrealists felt the sting of his pen, as did formalists of every stripe, whom he accused of abandoning history and responsibility and escaping to the haven of aesthetic purity. He wielded a fierce rhetoric of engagement. It was in conversation with Sartre at a Saint-Germain café that Astruc, against the grain, defined the "new avant-garde" as a cinema not of visual poetry but of flexible prose. Necessarily bound up with the world due to its technology, cinema atrophies when it turns in on itself as a mode of poetry. Form should be born in tension with recalcitrant subjects – the situations it strives to make appear. That was the sense of things at the height of neorealism.

In 1953, with neorealism's momentum slack, with a hot war in Korea and a Cold War everywhere else, an anthology called *Sept Ans du cinéma français* surveyed the plateau that had been reached in Paris since the disruption of the war. Its first chapter, "De l'Avant-Garde," written by *Cahiers* co-founder Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, boldly sets the stakes. He lifts a suite of current cineastes to the rank of France's "First Wave," that avant-garde generation of the 1920s . . . but with a difference. It's no use going back to those days, he asserts, pointing to the failure of Maya Deren, the Whitney Brothers, and other American and French amateurs working in 16 mm, to reclaim territory that had been lost at the coming of sound. Anachronistic, such experimental work will quickly turn passé; whereas genuine advances have been made since 1940 by Welles, by John Huston, and supremely by Bresson. For the cinema has thankfully given up its quest for "specificity"; it has matured to the point that styles that once might have been thought "anti-cinematographic" have pushed it the furthest. Cocteau's sublime *Orpheus* (*Orphée*, 1949), Doniol-Valcroze concludes, seems restrained, and thereby powerful and convincing, compared to his self-indulgent 1930 fantasy, *The Blood of a Poet* (*Le Sang d'un poète*).

By taking up the term "avant-garde" and domesticating it, Doniol-Valcroze and *Cahiers* preempted movements such as the *Lettrists* who, maintaining ideological purity, attacked the

establishment from beyond its borders. Bazin by contrast wanted to operate within the cultural mix, writing for a mass circulation daily (*Le Parisien libéré*) as well as for the intelligentsia (*Esprit*), thus addressing an integrated (though not an organic) public. He loved the fact that art films and local comedies played on screens across the street from one another, and he felt that the most artistically ambitious films ought not to be praised for escaping culture in flights of pique or abstraction; rather, their energy and imagination should be made to lever the entire cinematic field to a new plane. *Cahiers* was founded to keep the full field in view, while identifying and intensifying the most prophetic and hopeful trends. And so Bazin dubbed Rossellini, Bresson, Agnès Varda, and a few others "avant-garde" for jolting their colleagues – sensitive workaday directors – to expand their reach; meanwhile, he discounted experimental films that aimed at a coterie or museum audience. Not many years later, in the heyday of the New Wave, the *Cahiers* editors, who were determined to retain their own notoriety as feisty rebels against an outdated system, completely ignored the genuinely avant-garde works with which Guy Debord outflanked them on the left.[5] *Cahiers*' battle was with the classic French film that had rigidified into the "tradition of quality," and so, illegitimately, they donned the image of the avant-garde just to adorn the modernism to which they actually subscribed.

In fact, *Cahiers* has never paid much attention to the genuine avant-garde, whether that of the European 1920s or that of its postwar revival in New York. Emblematic is Bazin's *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*? which not only avoids experimental film but responds title for title, like a rebuke, to Georges Altman's 1931 *Ça, c'est du cinéma*,[6] the phrase that cinephiles of that early era would utter when something on the screen really struck their eyes or imaginations. Those first cinephiles lobbied for an avant-garde because, despite being "a fully technological art," silent cinema was felt to lag behind its older siblings, painting in particular. Writing for the next generation, Bazin discounted this inferiority complex, convinced that as a technological art – indeed, as a technological

medium (art be damned) – cinema made everything that appeared on screen potentially striking. Cinema would advance on the back of the subject matter it dared to take up.

The "new avant-garde" would ultimately morph into the "New Wave," but not for a decade. Meanwhile, the postwar ebullience waned and Cold War cultural battles spilled into film criticism. Neorealism scarcely survived the 1940s, and in France the establishment rigidified into a "quality system" that effectively kept new topics and new talent off the screens. All the while, however, an underground current worked its way into the cracks. Bazin made sure to identify an independent, conscientious, and serious cinema whenever it surfaced. In a rapturous review of Varda's first film (made in 1954), he lays out exactly what the avant-garde should mean at this point in history:

> *La Pointe Courte* illustrates well the notion of the avant-garde that we were looking to define in the days of *Objectif 49*. Far from formal experimentation and the negation of subject matter that characterized the avant-garde of the mid-1920s, Varda links her work to the intimate diary or better still to the kind of first person *récit* that for discretion's sake prefers to appear in third person. Let's hope this label "avant-garde" doesn't mean that her film will be less commercial than others, for we call it avant-garde not because of its oddity, nor its complexity, but rather because of its excess of simplicity, just like that of *Voyage to Italy* to which it deserves to be compared, especially on the basis of its subject matter rather than its mise en scène.[7]

As he did so often, Bazin here tapped into the wellspring of a particular film's value, then broadened his intuition until it reached a subterranean aesthetic current fertilizing the cinematic field. Without fanfare, *La Pointe Courte* and *Voyage to Italy* embarked on parallel unpredictable journeys in 1954, tugging cinema (and adventurous spectators) in their wake toward a rendezvous with the art's future. Each film involves an actual trip undertaken by an urbane but unhappy couple into the heart of a traditional Mediterranean society (Varda chose the fishing town of Sète, Rossellini

chose Naples). Nearly incomprehensible to the protagonists and completely foreign to the viewer, these social groups possess a temporality (they live at a speed) at odds with the sensibility of tourists, including the cinema and its public. The friction of two styles of life rubbing up against one another becomes uncomfortable, then heats the drama to the point of flame, as the *longue durée* of integrated cultures (labor and meals, births and deaths, rituals and festivals) surrounds and outlasts the banal crises of modern middle-class life, expressed by the boredom that erodes conjugal commitment.[8] Using the "modern" and the "traditional" to mutually clarify each other, Rossellini and Varda edge close to the dual ethnography that Jean Rouch had just then begun to practice. Rouch's "shared-documentaries" force two cultures together in order to illuminate invisible aspects of each and to do so without letting one dominate the other.[9] Bazin, who had been following Rouch's projects ever since Biarritz, relished such explorations, where cinema had to struggle with subject matter so obtuse that it was out of range for standard moviemaking.[10]

The chronology now seems clear, and was clear to Bazin at the time: 1939–41 – two heroic auteurs (Renoir and a 25-year-old Welles) heralded a break with the "classical" on a grand scale; 1954 – two other auteurs (Rossellini and a 25-year-old Varda) set the bar of the "modern" in subject matter, in mode of production, and in address to a mature audience. *Voyage to Italy* "opens a breach," wrote Rivette in *Cahiers*, "and all cinema, on pain of death, must pass through it."[11] Effecting this transition to the modern, were neorealism (mainly in Italy) and documentary shorts (mainly in France), which took up as subject matter the dehumanization of postwar life, and did so with a supple caméra-stylo wielded by what could only be called *auteurs*. To summarize Bazin's view, cinema became modern not because it reached a new stage on some formal growth chart, but because it found that it could and must abandon the scenarios laid out for it by studio scriptwriters so as to confront the complexities of a world outside the walls of cinema. Cinema had literally to outdo itself to become itself, had to abandon its putative specificity in order to get at what

lay beyond it in the magma of history (Rossellini), of culture (Resnais), or of the interior life (Bresson).

Bazin's overview of the arts and culture must be called evolutionary, rather than revolutionary. By treating genres and entire art forms as biologists treat related species, he could categorize the different speeds and intensities of the limitless corpus of films that he was determined to keep in play. Malraux' *Psychologie de l'art* (published between 1947 and 1951) gave Bazin the necessary framework. Cultural phenomena mutate according to internal growth patterns while also being transformed through environmental pressures, not to mention crossbreeding. One can easily see Malraux behind essays like "The Evolution of the Western," "Evolution of French Cinema," and the famous "Evolution of the Language of Cinema." All these depend on a version of the hypothesis that every culture and every artform passes through phases from primitive to classical, mannerist, and decadent. The "modern cinema" that Bazin felt emerging around him is a stage that would develop robustly for a while before inevitably turning mannerist later on. As its name suggests, the modern responds to history, inflecting the art form's autonomous evolution with the concerns of the moment. More than the other arts, cinema keeps the historical moment always close at hand, because its technology automatically registers what is before it and because this technology is continually upgraded (modernized) to permit up-to-date representations. And so cinema indeed evolves, but in relation to changing subject matter.

From the vantage point of our own decadent era, Antoine de Baecque (himself a *Cahiers* critic firmly formed by Bazin) distinguishes several modernisms at work during Bazin's time, and particularly just after he died.[12] I have been characterizing only the first phase, when clairvoyant critics followed adventuresome filmmakers who netted uncommon subject matter through inventive forms and styles. At the *Cinémathèque* and at ciné-clubs and art theaters of the 1950s where such films were introduced, a selection of older works played in repertory to give the modern a solid classical pedestal on which to stand. Murnau, Lang, Ford, Eisenstein,

and Hawks were trumpeted for having transformed the world into something enchanting, something that could be validated in the collective experience of the movie theater. Rohmer was the chief taste-maker at *Cahiers* during the 1950s, promulgating a cinema of revelation more than of critique. However, after Bazin was gone, this cinephilia soon found itself running up against a more properly modernist mission defined by *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and *Last Year at Marienbad*. Resnais' formal experimentation (nearly avant-garde) challenged audiences the way Jean Dubuffet and Rothko did in painting, or Bartók and Boulez in music. Difficulty and negativity measured the progress of art in the 1960s. De Baecque dramatizes a struggle in the heart of *Cahiers du cinéma* during this decade, focusing on the year 1963. On one side stood Rohmer and Truffaut, for whom cinema lets the world surprise us; on the other side was the ascendant modernism of Godard and especially Rivette, who emphasized cultural and political critique. Rivette would take over the journal from Rohmer, signaling a shift to Brecht, to Roland Barthes, and not long after to semiotics and structuralism. Yet throughout these and later, more radical shifts, *Cahiers* would retain its obsession with style, with *la caméra-stylo.*

Evolutionary conceptions of cinema (not to mention of art or of culture) raise questions about the floating relations among terms like classic, modern, and avant-garde.[13] The question mark at the end of Bazin's title, *What is Cinema?*, reappears to punctuate Dominique Païni's 1995 *Cinéma, art moderne?* and Jacques Aumont's 2007 *Moderne?* Cinema may always have been tied to the modern, but modernity by definition continues to change, upsetting this relation. Both these recent books face up to cinema's incessant self-nomination as the modern art par excellence, yet while they take pains to distinguish and historicize numerous versions of "modern cinema," they recognize the postwar moment as privileged. Here, if ever, cinema felt it could be equal to the task of representing what was in fact the rapidly transforming social and economic European landscape. New beliefs, new mores, new technologies, and a heightened speed of exchange made cinema the most up-to-date and culturally significant of the arts. But this

hardly means that it stood alone; as we have seen, Bazin believed its significance and its prowess to be symbiotically tied to the culture it engaged, a culture most complexly available through the other arts, particularly painting and literature.

The Ontogeny of Cinema

In effect there are two Bazins: the one of "L'Ontologie de l'image photographique" founding a history of cinema's realism – from Stroheim through Renoir to neorealism – and the one of "Pour un cinéma impur," bolstering a modernist cinema. The former has been thought provincial, as though Bazin were merely an apologist for a particular style or politics. Annette Michelson's perspicacious but ultimately negative review of *What is Cinema?* disagreed with his taste for realist style, since she herself upheld a tradition anchored in the Soviet school and in the historical avant-garde. Bazin may have championed a modern cinema, she wrote, but his aesthetics were anti-modernist.[14] Where he praised Rossellini by linking him to the American novel (Faulkner, Dos Passos), Michelson preferred Eisenstein and could link him to a more radical author, James Joyce! Bazin may have supported "a new avant-garde," but, as we have seen, he failed to credit the historical avant-garde (constructivism) or to recognize the genuine avant-garde of the postwar era (Stan Brakhage above all). What, she asks, would Bazin have said of Godard, whose films he just missed being able to see? Michelson was the first writer in English to take Bazin to task. Twenty years later, Noël Carroll pressed the same issue more generally: if cinema's essence derives from the congenital realism in its photographic makeup, then Bazin must inevitably rank films according to a reality coefficient that demotes and even excludes whole sectors of production.[15] But anyone reading extensively in his hundreds of articles finds instead of this putatively "essentialist Bazin" a more historically tuned critic, whose more complex and varied values gradually emerged, as his range expanded beyond neorealism. This second Bazin had it that "cinema's existence

precedes its essence"; he watched, and celebrated, the sacrifice of the medium's pure self-conception in its various encounters. We might say that the early Bazin, the one who formulated the 1945 "Ontologie de l'image Photographique," cared most about the signifier. The later Bazin, who consolidated his views in the 1952 "Pour un cinéma impur," cared more about the signified. Let me call the latter his "Ontogeny essay," so as to bring these two Bazins within a single frame, like some Picasso painting that gives you a portrait, face on and in profile.

In fact, the "Ontology" essay concludes on a notorious note that points ahead to Bazin's second phase: this single sentence "D'ailleurs le cinéma est un langage" upends the huge claims just made for raw photography, which may be necessary for cinema, yet is evidently insufficient to explain the full phenomenon that Bazin cares about. Today, Bazin might say that photography contributes essentially to cinema's DNA. But what about cinema's social growth, its historical identity, as it adapts to the roles it is asked to take on? "What cinema *is*" may depend on the primary psychological power of photographic realism, but cinema's actual *value* is historically constituted, since the fact that "the cinema is also a language" means that it evolves within an arena of cultural discourses.

What was troubling Bazin when he concluded his most famous essay with that striking six-word paragraph? Actually, it does not appear in the original essay of 1945, but was added as one of the many alterations he made when collecting his texts in 1958. Seen in the context of *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, this sentence, far from pulling the thread that unravels a single essay's complex argument, comes instead to switch lenses, distancing the object of study, photographic cinema, to make it visible in another dimension. Though still foundational, in 1958 the "Ontology" essay does not serve as the inaugural gesture in a budding career; rather, it is "the corner stone," (as Rohmer called it) sustaining over 50 pieces that Bazin built into a four-volume edifice at the end of that career. He lived to see only the proof pages of the first volume, which he subtitled *Ontologie et langage.* So the dangling final sentence

impertinently introducing *langage* into the *ontology* argument now looks like a savvy decision by Bazin, the editor, to create a plausible segue in a volume containing quite disparate chapters.

Now let's turn to volume two of *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* which Bazin prepared but never saw. This one, subtitled *Cinéma et les autres arts*, opens with "Pour un cinéma impur," his most careful treatment of literary adaptation. Cinema here is examined not by looking inward at its cellular makeup but, rather, looking outward toward its place relative to the arts around it. Should it position itself in open territory not occupied by the arts before it, or should it conspire with them in a tangled cultural field?

Bazin felt no contradiction in these two directions of his thought. Like any living form, cinema must adapt to conditions around it, sacrificing its putative self-identity (its ontology) as it matures into the shape it takes on in history (its adaptations). Along the way it acquires affiliations and vocations, just as people do. A boy of 16 may have certain predispositions and an innate character, but after working aboard ship, let's say, for 20 years, or in the military, or as a sculptor, and after becoming involved in marriage and religion and politics, what shall we say of "him"? Perhaps he has not lost a formative and original identity, but he has matured through adaptation. In the best case, to use a phrase of Stéphane Mallarmé that Bazin loved, vocation and affiliation change the cinema only in itself: "tel qu'en lui-même enfin l'éternité le change."

At *Esprit* with Bazin was Paul Ricoeur, who claimed: "Philosophy is really very simple. There are only two problems: the one and the multiple, and the same and the other."[16] Both arise in adaptation. Whatever "one is" depends on the others one engages, for the debts and promises one builds up maintain one's identity even as everything seems to evolve in one's life. So too "Whatever Cinema Is" changes underfoot. Realism may have been crucial to the development of cinematic modernity right after the war, but the 1950s brought other concerns, cultural ones related to the other arts in their properly modernist phase. In this context, Bazin theorized and exalted the medium's diversity, its "impurity." He

staged the opposition between the "Ontology" essay and the "Ontogeny" essay when in 1958 he had them lead off volumes one and two respectively of his collected works. These essays assumed a key position in his oeuvre, since both had originally gestated for more than a year and had appeared in luxury anthologies aimed at highly educated readers.

Bazin's concerns shifted from realism toward adaptation, and from ontology toward history, at a defineable moment. One can track Bazin's turning point to 1948, by examining his essays appearing in *Esprit*, the leftist Catholic organ where Bazin felt most intellectually at home. In January of that year came "Le Réalisme cinématographique et l'école italienne de la Liberation," while in July there appeared "L'Adaptation ou le cinéma comme digeste." True, the neorealism essay contains a section on the aesthetics of contemporary American fiction, something Bazin had learned from Claude-Edmonde Magny, his colleague at *Esprit*,[17] but "Cinema as Digest" is a far more systematic inquiry into cinema's place among the arts, opening for Bazin a sociological line of inquiry. Written in a proto-cultural studies idiom, it celebrates artisanship over authorship, as Walter Benjamin had done in "The Storyteller." Radio and cinema are returning us, Bazin says, to a healthy proliferation of fertile myths, legends, and tales, just as in medieval times. A narrative is an immaterial mental construct consisting of characters in situations; and while we may fetishize the author who first or most subtly gave body to this mental construct, this soul, its dissemination (in other languages, other media, or even reduced to mere digest) allows it full cultural reach.

Bazin turned toward issues of adaptation during a time of personal crisis. In 1949 he became embroiled like everyone in Western Europe in debilitating debates about Stalin and the Marshall Plan. It was also the year tuberculosis drove him into a hospital, then into a sanitarium outside Paris, and finally to a suburban home where he could be selective about his activities. Released from the obligation of daily reviewing during 1950, released from the political tensions that grew tauter with the declaration of the "Police Action" in Korea, he wrote far fewer articles and found the leisure

to pull together his scattered ideas about cinema's rapport with the other arts. Going less frequently to the movies, he tended to watch all the high-profile adaptations, while seeing fewer of the documentaries and foreign features that had fed his ideas about realism. Perhaps because of this cinematic diet, and because of discussions with his more conservative colleagues during the founding of *Cahiers du cinéma* (in 1951) and *Radio-cinéma-télévision* (1950), he speculated as much about the aesthetic as the sociological issues that adaptation raises. "Fidelity" replaces "digest" as the contested term.

From a distance he mailed in his intricate analysis of Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest* to appear in issue number three of *Cahiers du cinéma*. It hit the newsstands at the same time that "Theater and Cinema part I" came out in *Esprit*. Both the installments of this latter piece are lodged in issues that include pieces by Ricoeur, as well as major statements by *Esprit's* new editor, Albert Béguin.[18] Bazin must have prepared "Theater and Cinema" fastidiously, writing for an educated public devoted to serious art. The next year, "Pour un cinéma impur," also aimed at an elite, was meant once and for all to certify cinema as inheritor of a literary legacy and function.

Unbeknownst to Bazin, the paradox of cinema's essential impurity had already been played out in Japan in a telling manner. There, just before and after 1920, something explicitly called "The Pure Film Movement" aimed to overturn the stultifying theatrical model that producers in that country had followed from the outset. Pure meant "cinematic": a pure film would unroll without the usual voice-over commentary of a *benshi*, even without intertitles, since images should be photographed and sequenced in such a way as to develop stories and engender feelings on their own. Curiously, this movement was driven by novelists; just as curiously – indeed paradoxically – these literati sought to put Japanese cinema on the map by imitating Western prototypes. Thus the future of Japanese cinema was meant to become pure and purely Japanese, but only on the backs of novelists and of European ideas.

After apparently dying out, the movement's ideals were largely fulfilled in a most famous "pure film" of 1926 called *A Page of Madness*, a collage of mental images cascading forward without explanation.[19] Symptomatically, this "page" was scripted by one of the greatest prose writers of the century, future Nobel laureate Yasunari Kawabata. Did anyone register the irony that this film's purely cinematic character owed so much to a noted writer and to the pages of a script that put it in motion? This is precisely the kind of dynamics that 25 years later Bazin knew how to register and begin to measure; he would have credited as well cinema's readiness (still premature) to inherit the function that for years has belonged to the *récit*, perhaps allowing literature to take up other modes and missions. In fact, he thought there was no reason to discredit a culture where most works and most media are highly mixed.

Indeed, *A Page of Madness* came out just a year before *The Jazz Singer* (Crosland, 1927) made it clear that cinema would walk into the future married in some fashion to sound, and particularly to language. We have seen that Roger Leenhardt was the first film critic to make a case for the virtue of the hybrid form when he dared to besmirch the precious purity of "diaphanous images" in favor of solid blocks of sound and picture that he was glad to call "shots." Thus was born the line of thought leading to Bazin and *Cahiers du cinéma*. Leenhardt especially drew the admiration of Eric Rohmer and his young disciples: "We are almost at the point of adopting as our motto Roger Leenhardt's . . . ; preference for films about which one can say 'that's not film' [ce n'est pas du cinéma]."[20] Both men stood for cinema as the art of reality, set in direct opposition to the so-called "fine arts." As Rohmer's later career would make abundantly clear, nothing can be more strictly cinematic than human beings talking to one another in medium close-up. Seldom does he add music, sound effects, or pictorial embellishment. Beauty – and this Rohmer explicitly sought – emanates from people and things as framed and regarded, not from the artistic construction of the image. In June 1949 he wrote in *Combat*:

> Let those who still mourn the loss of an imagined [cinematic] purity do what they like with this secret: Deprived of the most ordinary power of signifying, that is, language, the characters in silent films perfected a subtle method of letting us into their hearts. Everything became a sign or a symbol. Flattered by the compliment to his intelligence, the spectator worked on understanding and forgot to see. Now the screen, liberated from this foreign task since the advent of the talkies, should go back to its true role, which is to show and not to tell. In the talkies, the appearance is the essence, and it draws upon itself the substance of an interior world, a world of which it is the incarnation, not the sign.[21]

The same month in *Les Temps modernes*, Rohmer denigrated the pursuit of signification through the "plasticity of the image or the rites of editing," since this adopts a mission that properly belongs to painting, music, and poetry. Cinema, based not on the abstractions of the image but on the density of shots, should borrow "from the only art that, like cinema, is at once mise en scène and writing, that is, the novel. As a Balzac or a Dostoevsky, whose disdain for the refinements of expression proves that the novel is not written with words but with beings and things from the world, the writer-director of tomorrow will know the joy of finding his style in the texture of the real world."[22] Rohmer takes as his examples two films scheduled to be shown the very next month at the "Festival du Film Maudit," Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons* and Bresson's *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, each drawn from a novel. In both examples, a disciplined cinematic style comprehends (that is, encloses) what can be known only in part: the ambiguities of language, the mysterious properties of objects and characters, and the expressive nature of settings. The spectator sees directly what these films have captured, even if much remains hidden, because interior or out of frame.

It would be left to Bazin to specify what Rohmer formulated so abstractly, and he did so also in relation to *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*. In a sentence that his translator singled out when he first introduced Bazin to English readers, Bazin wrote that Bresson reached a pinnacle of cinematic expression in a scene wherein

"The sound of a windshield-wiper against a page of Diderot is all it took to turn it into Racinian dialogue."[23] Ambient sounds, Bazin argues, stand at odds with the spoken drama, distracting us, even competing for our attention. Such sounds, anachronistic in relation to the Diderot tale that is the basis of the plot, and aesthetically at cross-purposes with an adaptation that ascends to the abstraction of classical tragedy, are "neutral, foreign bodies, like a grain of sand that gets into and seizes up a piece of machinery."[24] Such a "seizure" of literature by the technology of cinema might seem to sully both media; yet, "as dust affirms the transparency of the diamond," Bazin considered this to be "impurity at its purest," a sublime instance of cinema, whatever cinema may be.

And so when in 1953 many of the contributors to *Sept Ans du cinéma français* advanced Bresson as an uncompromising avant-gardist – and France's leading postwar director – they did so not despite the fact that he adapted novels, but because of that fact.[25] The words and gestures of human models who incarnate the design of fiction played out in material settings – such is the basis of Bresson's "cinematography." Bazin was sure that this does more than update the novel. It lodges the literary in the world. Books may exist in libraries, but the "literary" exists only as writing and reading, in mental or spiritual space. Cinema can open onto that space, and be the better for it.

Bazin worked out these ideas while François Truffaut was living in his home. Since the young film fanatic had such a passion for novels and such antipathy for the current state of French cinema, they inevitably discussed literary adaptation. In the thirty-first number of *Cahiers du cinéma*, dated January 1954, against the bland and uneventful days of the Fourth Republic, Truffaut's explosive article, stemming from those conversations, appeared under the title, "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" ("A Certain Tendency in French Cinema"). In what could be seen as the first salvo of a putsch to seize control of French cinema, Truffaut's essay seared the carefully preserved skin of the film establishment and provoked an instant scream of pain and anger in response. You can feel this in the article's vitriolic tone, even after

it had been diluted by the magazine's wary editors, Bazin and Doniol-Valcroze. In retrospect, *Cahiers*' rancor toward those in charge of France's cinematographic health is evident from its first issue in 1951, yet no one foresaw the outright violence of "A Certain Tendency in French Cinema," a terrorist piece designed to maim and injure, not to alter behavior through the politeness of mere criticism.

Holding Bresson in reserve, Truffaut brazenly assaulted the establishment's stronghold, the castle of "literature." In a first charge, he alleged that the dozen directors and handful of screenwriters dominating French cinema had betrayed the aspirations of the artform because first of all they betrayed the literary tradition from which they presumptuously saw themselves evolving. True, the "Cinema of Quality" thrived on adaptations of novels by Zola, Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Gide, Radiguet, and Colette. Even those productions that were officially "original scripts" could be said to exhibit literary dialogue and the kind of carefully sculpted sets, costume, and acting that the French associate with good taste. Yet the conception of literature fostered by the "quality approach" was, in the eyes of *Cahiers du cinéma*, puerile, ingratiating, and debilitating to both media. Truffaut wrote: "I consider an adaptation of value only when written by a 'man of the cinema.' Aurenche and Bost [the scenarists who were the architects of the quality approach] are essentially literary men and I reproach them here for being contemptuous of the cinema by underestimating it. They behave, *vis-à-vis* the scenario, as if they thought to reeducate a delinquent by finding him a job."

It was simple for Truffaut to ridicule the pretensions of this style, simpler to prove these so-called "adaptations" bogus. After all, how could Jean Delannoy's *La Symphonie pastorale* (1946) from Gide's elegantly slim twentieth-century novella come out looking and sounding at all like Christian-Jaque's *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1948), taken from Stendhal's sprawling novel? Some industrial process has reduced such different literary sources to indifferent cinematic representations. Truffaut blasted the facility of the writers together with the servile, routine work of businesslike

directors who were satisfied to stage what had been digested into conventional screenplays, populating them with well-known and nicely adorned actors.

Although he didn't use the term at the time, Truffaut was out to promote strong cinematic *écriture*. The "Quality System" may have fancied itself the direct heir of the venerable institution of Literature, but as an institution itself, a stultifying one, it had the effect of suppressing the energy and creativity of genuine writing; and only a particular effort of writing makes a literary work worth adapting in the first place. Truffaut's allegiance went to individual cineastes he was proud to call *auteurs* with names like Jean Renoir, Jacques Tati, Jean Cocteau, and especially Robert Bresson, for whom making movies is a material gesture of writing.

Bazin had made this very point when he first published "Pour un cinéma impur," reiterating it in 1958 in his contribution to a special issue, "Film and Novel," of *La Revue des lettres modernes*, which opens with his "critical position":

> The essential is perhaps not that a film be formally "faithful" to a novel. What literature can truly bring to cinema is not so much a reservoir of interesting subjects as a sense of what a *récit* is. What matters is to detach film from *spectacle* so that it can at last approach *writing* [*l'écriture*]. From this point of view, works like *Monsieur Ripois*, *Le Rideau Cramoisi* . . . or the recent *Bonjour Tristesse* aren't stories that have been "staged" ["mise en scènes"] but works "written" with camera and actors. Whether involving adaptations properly speaking or not, clearly it is in this sense that we should wait for, hope for, the genuine replacement of the novel by the cinema.[26]

Toward the conclusion of his article, to rout the enemy, Truffaut wheeled up his artillery, *Diary of a Country Priest*, the best adaptation he knew, and one replete with stunningly expressive examples of cinematic writing. Truffaut singled out Bernanos' famous confession scene, where Bresson altered neither the dialogue nor the setting; instead, he ran a strong cinematic current to charge what

was already there in the book: a character emerges by degrees from the shadow, her eyes gleaming defiantly, furiously. Now in the scenario that Pierre Bost had first proposed to Bernanos, this same scene was grossly manhandled, transformed into a spectacle. The "Quality" version may have been highly "cinematic," but it was neither Bernanos nor genuine cinema; hence, Truffaut gloats, it was rejected. In the Sartrean vocabulary of the day, Bresson's version appears "authentic" while Bost's was patently meretricious.

Truffaut's article immediately became a touchstone for the rampant auteurism that characterized French film culture for the rest of the 1950s and throughout the reign of the New Wave. With the caméra-stylo its defining metaphor, cinematic modernism stripped authority from the hands of scriptwriters and studio producers, passing it into those of cineastes. The timing was perfect, for at this very moment the primacy of the "auteur" became central to discussions held at ciné-clubs and in magazines. Nearly an article of faith at *Cahiers*, the auteur policy seemed requisite for the artform's maturity. Writing in the same journals as Truffaut – *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Arts* – Godard lifted his favorite filmmakers onto the shoulders of great writers. (Nicholas Ray's "*Bitter Victory* is a kind of *Wilhelm Meister* 1958 . . . the most Goethean of films," Joseph Mankiewicz is the reincarnation of Jean Giraudoux, etc.[27]) Godard was certain that the Stendhals of today would be out there making movies. After all, cinema like literature "is not a craft. It is an art. It does not mean teamwork. One is always alone on the set as before the blank page. And to be alone . . . means to ask questions. And to make films means to answer them. Nothing could be more classically romantic."

At this point Bazin demurred, breaking ranks with his young disciples. Although he is on record as claiming the filmmaker to be "at last the equal of the novelist,"[28] his interest in documentary could push authorship to the wings of his critical attention, and frequently off-stage altogether. Documentaries establish the medium's difference from the traditional arts, for they have the capacity to shrink the place of the human within a world that appears

sometimes providential, sometimes uncaring and random. Bazin tracked the fate of imagination and desire in filmmakers who gave themselves over to something beyond themselves, something beyond their species, something he enigmatically referred to as "the time of the object."[29]

Truffaut, who had no taste for documentaries, recognized that Bazin's attraction to recalcitrant "subject matter" could operate in fiction films as well, and that filmmakers can submit to what is before them rather than "direct" it. In *Stromboli* (1950), Rossellini's camera gapes uncomprehending at a mountain and its magma, just as does Ingrid Bergman when she falls helpless to her knees at the summit of the volcano. This neorealist ethos sometimes brings the background center-stage to eclipse the characters (as it would in the finale of a film titled, precisely, *L'Eclisse*; Antonioni, 1962). However, far more often the human beings (not mere scripted characters) who populate their features become the "subject matter" of the neorealist filmmaker. Withdrawing as "director," Rossellini explores the physiognomy, bearing, voice, and gestures of a star (Ingrid Bergman, Anna Magnani) or of some nonprofessional chosen from the locale. Whether obtuse or malleable, human beings on screen need not be agents of the scriptwriter's or the director's imagination. In his beautiful eulogy to Humphrey Bogart, Bazin credited the flesh-and-blood person for the success of so many of the films in which he figured. While it is undeniable that the directors who captured his face, voice, and demeanor made creative use of him in the fictions they concocted, Bogart fascinates us (and fascinated the most sensitive of those cineastes) beyond his roles.[30] Godard shared Bazin's sensitivity to this tension between fiction and documentary. If *Les Maîtres fous* documents a ritual in which men are overtaken by roles, Rouch's next great achievement, *Moi un noir*, goes further. In this, Godard's favorite film of 1958 (but one Bazin's early death kept him from seeing), the "director" handed authorial control over to that film's ostensible "subjects." These unemployed youths in the slums of Abidjan adopt the names of stars (Eddie Constantine, Dorothy Lamour) and narrate their own stories. Rouch follows

rather than directs them, while putting together what can only with qualification be called his own film.

Such examples confound the notion of auteurism, and Bazin stood ready to widen the paradox.[31] Certainly his book on Welles, not to mention his essays on Chaplin, Buñuel, and Renoir, provoked his disciples to proclaim a new era when filmmakers are indeed the equal of novelists. Yet Bazin explicitly rebuked those same disciples for neglecting or denigrating the many forces that produce or affect a film, some of which can be listed in the credits (writers, actors, cinematographers) and some of which remain tacit historical determinants (censorship, economics, social mores, etc.). Poets, novelists, and painters may be largely responsible for whatever appears in their finished works, but the director hasn't such control over a film whose industrial mode of production inevitably introduces noise into the system. Bazin was ever on the lookout for unintended and unconscious factors. He celebrated films in which the auteur vanishes; after all, at the most primary level he was fascinated by the photographic image "in the making of which man plays no part." This point of view he stood prepared to adopt even when the subject was a novel.

And so Bazin supported Truffaut's notorious article, to be sure, but not because it instantiates cineastes as rulers of imaginative worlds. He approved rather the way that Truffaut's essay demands that cinema approach strong novels scrupulously. A filmmaker should explore a novel as though it were a fictional land, as solid and extensive as Niger is for Rouch and Naples for Rossellini. A conscientious adaptation should search for new means to bring out distinctive aspects of the chosen book; after all, a book is of interest only because of its "distinction." Forget the cinema; forget the auteur. When it came to adaptation, it is the novel Bazin cared about, the novel that constitutes the kind of obtuse, complex temporality that attracts the modern cinema, the novel that constitutes subject matter that cinema will never be able completely to incorporate, though it will grow up trying to do so.

On the other hand, the cinema includes Hitchcock, master of control, and one of Truffaut's idols.

Credits and Auteurs: An Ecology of Adaptation

Bazin was obviously attracted to extremes during the 1950s, a decade generally deemed dull. It's not surprising that he championed ethnographic documentaries and that he cared for neorealist fictions in which something excitingly unscripted is registered through the cinematic encounter. His support for adaptations is harder to fathom, where script and planning must rule the day. But *Diary of a Country Priest* made him realize that even in adaptation the language and situations of a powerful novel can serve as subject matter just as alien as untamed animals, distant topographies, or foreign social groups. But then where does cinematic artistry reside and – a related question – who deserves credit for what we value on screen?

The *Cahiers* critics were quick to answer: in films that matter, the auteur alone is responsible. This position is a vulgarization of Sartre's existentialist ethic wherein the author's rapport with his text constitutes an emblem of responsibility, one that applies to all of us as we author our lives. But Bazin – never far from Sartre's concerns though seldom in sync with him – offered a view that comes close to our day's post-humanism. Rossellini, he insinuates, delivers not his own personal world, but one belonging to history (or to God), just as Nicholas Ray and John Huston give us access to Bogart's sensibility, and Bresson lets us experience Bernanos. Bazin may be teasing us, since he also holds that these directors "filter" what they allow to appear on the screen; nevertheless, more Surrealist than Sartrean, he takes the author to be a transmitter of something outside himself with which he communicates. Can we not call the simple technological registration of light on photographic plates a kind of "automatic writing"? Films may be conceived and directed by human beings with proper names, but what we see on the screen, especially at the most interesting moments, can exceed conception and direction. Thus before being a John Huston film, *The African Queen* (1951) delivers the sheer presence of Humphrey Bogart, his charisma and authority.

Beyond this – or rather beneath it – Bazin recognized something else at work in the celluloid, the traces made by light reflecting off a familiar but mortal face . . . the perpetual and visible reminder of Bogart's absence and inevitable death.

And so, to whom or to what should we attribute the significance of images? Do we credit John Cassavetes for incorporating inventive actors within *Shadows* (1959), since their often spontaneous expressions really do give body to the film? And what about that film's famed Charles Mingus solo? Improvising while watching a rough cut, did this incomparable jazzman accompany and supplement "a film by John Cassevetes," in the manner of those silent film "performances"? Or should we say that Cassavetes inserted Mingus' haunting horn within an integrated orchestration of pictures and sounds, whose pointed "direction" comes from him, the director, alone?

About the time Cassavetes was preparing *Shadows* and just as Bazin was putting together his collected works, René Clair wrote a report on the history and problem of credits.[32] Their ever-increasing length (that now includes not just so-called creative personnel, but the full industrial support system right down to food caterers) spreads out the responsibility for any film, and mocks its pretense to art. Clair wanted a film's credits reduced to whatever attracts or aids the viewer, serving like the simple label pasted below or to the side of a painting in a museum; instead, credits emulate the booklet passed out at the opera listing the "distribution" of roles for a given performance, plus creative personnel (though not the stagehands!).

In his directorial career, Clair is famous for having orchestrated and channeled every possible register that could contribute to the experience of "his" films. A conductor of tone and rhythm, he recognized that, when displayed, credits slow down moving pictures and contaminate them with words. Coming as a rule ahead of the onrush of pictures and sounds, they are meant to ready the spectator for what follows. Infinite hope attends that moment when the screen lights up and the first strains of the musical score are heard. Hence the attention and money accorded pre-credit

sequences, and to the credits as well, whose graphics and images are generally consigned to a specialist, a sort of sous-chef (also credited) with a particular kind of imagination. There follow the film's first dramatic scenes, when the director and cameraman are free in a way they never will be again during the course of the movie.

Film students are taught to watch the first 20 minutes of any feature vigilantly, for this is when an experience gets launched and begins to find the trajectory of its flight. Imagine this early phase as random galactic motion that progressively pulls itself together into coordinated patterns of stars and solar systems. Swirling clouds of dust, collisions of astral bodies, and unpredictable flare-ups express a primordial energy strong enough to keep things in motion till the end of time – two hours later. In Freud's terms, the initial moments are dense with the dream work of condensation, displacement, and primary imaging. Soon these must pass into the domain of "secondary elaboration" and then out into the open thoroughfares of public interpretation.[33] Frequently, characters in the film initiate its interpretation. And then all of us, whether trained critics or ordinary spectators looking for a couple of hours of diversion, will fit what we have seen and understood into the rest of what we know and understand, settling the film as comfortably as we can within us. And so watching a film follows a disappointing scenario: from hope, provocation, and the promise of something truly new, we wind up back on the street with just another story under our belts, usually the same story, one we can talk about, catalog, or simply forget.

Even before the projector lights up, this descent from enticing raw material to processed understanding can be experienced on the posters in the lobby, where arresting images surround or overlay scripted credits. A tension between these two semiotic registers activates two psychological domains, the pictures working on the unconscious, the words establishing not just meaning but its source. Credits, once merely a convenient, paperless program, are now routinely integrated into the experience that every film provides; they prepare that experience, orienting its viewing and

interpretation. In the contest between language and image, credits constitute a wall of words engineered to hem in free floating images that otherwise might take us in several directions at once. Lured to the movie theater by the promise of spectacle, we may expect to regress to a state of mute wonderment. But credits are sobering, for they identify the images not as natural force but as someone's discourse.

The form and function of credits work to control cinematic experience. If we were able, would we dismount the authors who rein in the galloping image, steering it along the bridle path of ideology? Must we not do so when it is a master author we hope to reach, that is, when the film *in toto* credits a known literary source to which it is indebted and which grabbed our interest in the first place? If every film displays at the outset a negotiation of horse and rider, of image surge and discursive direction, what then of adaptations where the film itself rides underneath the imposing authority of a commanding text?

The sign of the problematic of adaptation is the signature of the author, occasionally reproduced in facsimile on screen, like Emile Zola's in Renoir's *La Bête humaine* (1938). Even if few films today fade in on a stately volume, the title and author of significant adaptations spread an aura to envelop the other names listed in the credits, underwriting the production by association. The author's name, a variant of a signature, may be a mere surface mark, but it embeds a fourth dimension, the temporal process that, in the case of adaptation, brought an entire film out of the textual body of a novel. Anchored to a submerged reef of values, all films, but adaptations most notably, float to their audiences secured by that slender line of credits that, while attesting to their pedigree, allows us to trace their genesis.

In the case of adaptation, genesis – and credits are called *le générique* in French – goes back to a single treasured source, the book that is the origin and perhaps the final measure of the film. Even in our skeptical age, this lifeline – call it fidelity – just won't be easily cut.[34] Fidelity is the umbilical cord that nourishes the judgments of ordinary viewers as they comment on what are

effectively aesthetic and moral values after they emerge from Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), or Steven Spielberg's *The Color Purple* (1985), or Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). If we tuned in on these discussions we might find ourselves listening to a vernacular version of comparative media semiotics.

For some time, the leading academic trend has ignored or disparaged this concern with fidelity, finding the *vertical* line that anchors a film to its literary substrate exasperating and constraining. Scholars today dare to detach the films they write about from their anchors and let them float free. Why not? In postmodernism every text, including every adaptation, is valued for the way it vibrates the *horizontal* network of neighboring texts, none of them to be taken as necessarily "superior," not even the novel which lends its name, plot, and characters to a film. If anything, adaptation feeds cultural studies, a discipline born for this era of proliferation, where textual contagion counts more than does textual interpretation. Cultural studies takes its cue from producers in their ambition to multiply a text's impact through advertising, sequels, spinoffs, translations, and "versions" of all sorts.

Bazin again and again displayed a fascination with the way cinema insinuates itself into the mechanisms of culture. "Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest," his first extended consideration of the phenomenon, applauds proliferation. The adaptation business, he noted, increases sales of the originals and develops what the arts have always sought, "a public." True, it generally does so by domesticating a powerful original, but this need not alter its constitution. Like an electric "transformer," it dials down the current of an inflammatory novel lest it ignite the screen; the light and heat produced still come from that novel, even if its intensity has diminished. Producers (transformers) gauge just how much of the original novel the medium and the public can take. His example is *Devil in the Flesh*, the novel written by Cocteau's intimate friend, Raymond Radiguet, just after World War I, when it was deemed so scandalous that it could not have been filmed. Toned down by Aurenche and Bost for the screen (and for a much wider public) in 1947, it still provoked a scandal, since its theme of irresistible

eroticism flying in the face of patriotism was equally shocking after World War II, even in its lesser dosage.

Certain sources – what else should we call them – are so grand as to power innumerable adaptations. Such, from the beginning, was the case with *Les Misérables*, a phenomenon to which Bazin frequently returned. In this nineteenth-century blockbuster, Victor Hugo not only wrote of the masses; he expected to be read by everyone. And so it happened. Everyone did read this book. Frantic crowds lined up in front of French booksellers for each of the three installments, April, May, and June of 1862. Translations came out in many languages within the very year of publication. Hugo profited to the tune of nearly $2 million in today's currency, just from the initial translation rights. The publishing industry had seen nothing like this, and they made the most of it. Sales responded to advertising campaigns associated with reprints and spinoffs. Five million copies of the first Chinese edition were sold. Coming to America during our Civil War, it was perfectly timed to support Lincoln's "Emancipation Proclamation." It has been a best-seller here ever since, with sales jumping every 20 years or so on the backs of new versions for stage and then screen.

For *Les Misérables* immediately offered itself up to graphic illustrators and theatrical producers. Around the time of the Dreyfus affair, and catering to social tensions, Charles Hugo rendered his father's creation in 17 tableaux so successfully that, ever since, impresarios have been ready to revive *Les Misérables* to exploit the talents of a star-actor or the fever of a troubled political moment. Of course it was also revived to make money – something it always has done, as the musical *Les Miz* reminds us tour after tour.

To Bazin, *Les Misérables* functioned as a myth, like *The Mahabharata*, its characters and episodes having transcended their original representation by Hugo. Noting its dozens of screen versions (including Egyptian, Indian, and American), he focused on the French ones made in 1913, 1923, 1934, and 1957, because their differences comprise an index of mutations in the institution of cinema itself. Albert Capellani's film was exhibited serially before World War I, while Raymond Bernard's came out as three features

running concurrently at neighboring theaters in 1934. In 1958 the length had been reduced to around 200 minutes, permitting distribution as a single evening's experience, where color and CinemaScope provided the grandeur lost in truncation. But more than exhibition practices had changed in a half-century. The earlier versions, and particularly the magnificent one of 1934, find cinema equal to Hugo's social romanticism. In the shadow of Abel Gance's *Napoléon* (1927), acting, lighting, and music unabashedly inflate the melodrama.[35] But the cinema has evolved since World War II, Bazin points out once again, and both this myth and the cinema itself now seem diminished in a film that tones down the acting and mise en scène to conform to norms of the 1950s.

What would Bazin have thought of the four major French versions that have come out since 1980? He would certainly have used the opportunity to track what has become of cinema in the intervening years. For he stood always ready to track the spread of a title, an author, an idea from medium to medium, language to language, period to period. In the ecology of culture – and with its most Darwinian connotation in mind – adaptation is far more than just the common practice of screenwriters and producers; it names the *horizontal* processes of growth, transmutation, and atrophy visible within a phenomenon that bears a single name, cinema, even while it changes in a quest to survive in history. As historian, cultural ecologist, and cinephile, Bazin was alive to all aspects of this process.

Fidelity: The Economy of Adaptation

As the word connotes, adaptation is a general condition of organisms, including cultural ones. A large percentage of the 2,500 or so films produced annually in Bazin's day drew their material from existing sources. The film industry operated mechanically, as industries do, and charged its story construction sector to cut down whole forests of novels and plays to be fed into the sawmills of script development. But Bazin saw this process in organic terms,

particularly when it involved stately trees; these most often were "digested" to nourish culture via the circulatory system that spreads images to theaters and their audiences. Taken as one cultural form growing not in isolation but amidst many others, cinema absorbs or grabs what it needs from its neighbors, often giving something back in an ecology of the "life of forms." Complexity increases when one recognizes that forms evolve at different rates; so that if cinema were to take up the mission that the novel has served for so long, as Bazin suggests, would it be the mission of Balzac or that of Robbe-Grillet? Bazin had discussed exactly such issues with Claude-Edmonde Magny while she completed her *The Age of the American Novel: The Film Aesthetic of Fiction between the Two Wars* (1948). While both were devotees of Malraux, they had undoubtedly absorbed much from Malraux' great predecessor, Henri Focillon, and his 1934 *Vie des formes*.[36]

Few members of the public, indeed few scholars, recognize that the movies thrive as a tangled jungle of adaptation with intertwined artforms multiplying the biodiversity of hybrid works. Instead, adaptation is generally taken to be a fenced-off and cultivated field of films carefully made from notable literary works. This subset of adaptation Bazin called "translations," to stand apart from the more normal "digests." And with translation comes the truculent issue of "fidelity," which Bazin found unavoidable and valuable. Since adaptations are a reality of cinema at this stage of its evolution, he reasoned, its maturation will be accelerated whenever some privileged source text makes cinema reconsider its language, in the effort to translate it into a new form. Adaptation may be a vehicle that spreads cinema far and wide across the culture, but in particular instances, adaptation-as-translation can make the humming motor of the industry stall; rather than moving smoothly across (mass) culture, translations pass vertically into the cultural past.

The *vertical* chain of fidelity that anchors an adaptation to the bedrock of its source can cause it to draw apart from the main flotilla of films that drift with the Gulf Stream of fashion. Bazin saw this happen with *Diary of a Country Priest*, as it suffused its

audience with a different sensibility and set of values. Cinema's musculature grows through such exercise, for it struggles with the resistance of the original to contemporary norms.

Fidelity is a concept that hinges the two panels of Bazin's interest (and of his career): his concern with cinema's ontology and with what I've insisted on calling his ontogeny. Fidelity comes explicitly into play toward the end of his defense of impure cinema, when he links realism and adaptation in such a way as to let us imagine a possible unified field theory of film:

> Cinematic expression had to make the kind of progress found in optical devices for it to achieve [a] high degree of aesthetic fidelity. The distance between the *film d'art* and Hamlet [Olivier, 1948] is as great as that between the primitive condenser lens of the magic lantern and the complex range of lenses in modern cinema. The impressive intricacy of this fidelity, however, has as its only goal to compensate for the distortions, aberrations, distractions and reflections for which the lens is responsible; that is to say to make the camera as objective as possible. On an aesthetic level [adaptation] requires a science of fidelity comparable to that of the cinematographer.[37]

Progress in "cinematographic expression" occurs through "translation," since translation requires the discovery or creation of equivalencies within two language systems. A treasured original demands not a mechanical substitution of elements but an approximation of an equivalent "spirit," or, as he put it in relation to Bresson's translation of Bernanos, "a ceaselessly creative respect for his source."[38]

David Lean understood that viewers expected his hallmark 1946 *Great Expectations* to be close to Dickens, in the same way that readers of this beloved novel in Swedish or Polish do. A current theorist of translation, Lawrence Venuti, addresses film adaptation by dismissing at the outset the notion that different languages (verbal or audiovisual) can communicate a self-same content (plot, character, theme, value). What occurs, he believes, is that the original is mediated by an "interpretant" (or ideological

grid) while it is on the way to becoming a new or adapted text.[39] The intepretant governs the choices made in adaptation. Rather than a mechanical transfer from one semiotic system to another, the filmmaker interprets the source via an audiovisual form that also includes attitudes and concerns brought to the project. This supplements Bazin's view in that it takes account of the temporal and cultural distance of original and translation, not just the distance between language systems. When Venuti isolates the different "interpretants" operating in the two moments of creation, his assessment is sensitive to cultural, not just semiotic, values and so would indeed involve a horizontal as well as vertical dimension, since every adaptation takes place within a "horizon" of contemporaneous values, including other texts within the purview of the filmmaker and the projected audience. In his main example, the celebrated but controversial 1968 *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare can be said to have played into the concern over bisexuality amid the flower-children of the 1960s, as Franco Zeffirelli registered and amplified previously unremarked connotations in the original. Shakespeare's play grew through a cinematic interpretation that may owe something to other psychologically and stylistically edgy films of the period, like Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and Marco Bellocchio's *Fists in the Pocket* (*I Pugni in tasca*, 1965). Certainly cinema grew in stylistic versatility, not to mention prestige, just as Bazin argued, thanks to this encounter with Shakespeare.

Venuti might well have asked about the staging of Shakespeare throughout the centuries, since theater in its living form always involves "interpretants," known as directors and dramaturges. Further, he might have asked about *Romeo and Juliet* as performed in German or Russian, that is, about the legitimacy of any translation of the Bard. He asks instead of Shakespeare himself what interpretants fashioned his "version" of a tale of two characters named Romeo and Juliet? What sources did Shakespeare draw on? What other plays (by rival playwrights) did he look to? What was in his library? Venuti's hermeneutic approach risks spreading out both horizontally and vertically to infinity. Still, Shakespeare's

text makes us stop. As does, for billions of readers, the Bible. Its interpretations – including translations, adaptations, and illustrations – have been as necessary to the spread of religion and of culture as they have been fraught with discord. Walter Benjamin used the Bible to conclude his great essay, "The Task of the Translator," arriving uncannily close to the views Bazin later put forth about fidelity and the foreign: the encounter of two language systems at the site of a treasured text fosters growth all around.[40] Bazin, like Benjamin, can be thought contradictory, whereas they addressed complex phenomena from more than one angle simultaneously. In this instance, they both understood the dynamics of textual production to be *fluid* (dissemination), but they also understood that the *solidity* of certain textual monuments (anchorage) is not completely illusory.

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For Bazin, adaptation serves as one more instance, though a key one, where cinema has served as the twentieth century's intrepid discovery ship. Its encounters with the foreign compel it to grow up, and demand the same of those spectators aboard. Neorealism had struck Bazin so forcefully just after the war that ever after he was on the lookout for encounters in other genres. For instance, a spate of films about painting made in the late 1940s and 1950s shocked him in a manner he had seldom felt in visits to museums.[41] He wrote that this new genre has "snowballed since the war . . . becoming the most important development in the past twenty years in the history of documentary, maybe in the history of cinema itself."[42] In the realm of fiction, Japan startled him, as it did the entire film culture of Europe. After the unexpected triumph of *Rashomon* (Kurosawa, 1950) at the 1951 Venice festival, his eyes looked East, where he and his colleagues at *Cahiers* found the filmmaker of their dreams, Kenji Mizoguchi. As they took in one masterpiece of his after the next, they had to adapt to a fully different cinematic sensibility leading to an exquisite and distinct culture. It wasn't precisely postwar Japan that they met on the screen, but rather Mizoguchi's (and postwar Japan's) own

encounter with a patrimony it had betrayed in the insanity of the Pacific War, a patrimony then criminalized by the American Occupation, a patrimony modern Japan needed to adapt if the nation were to survive as distinct.

Mizoguchi's commitment to adapt Japan's heritage I find most clearly laid out in the opening sequence of *Utamaro and his Five Women* (1946), when the artist-hero is challenged to a duel by a cocky exponent of the aristocratic Kano school of painting. How could someone from the popular class who draws for money stand up to a noble painter for whom art is a religious calling? A contest with paintbrushes, not swords, ensues, Utamaro "improving" with a few deft strokes the painter's rendition of the Goddess of Mercy. "There, that's better. Wouldn't you agree?" says Utamaro triumphantly. "I've put life into the figure." Economy, spontaneity, and the lively representation of an iconic figure are all on the side of the artist who eats, drinks, and sleeps with the people. In fact, Utamaro has brought to life "White Robed Guanyan," a powerful Buddhist icon, whose image was given canonical form in the late thirteenth century by Muqi. Utamaro animates her on paper not through slavish imitation but by capturing the spirit of movement and life that Muqi had invested in his masterpiece. Just like Utamaro, Mizoguchi felt himself and his art form to be on the side of the people and yet connected to the mission by which art ties humanity to the sacred.

Do the issues of copying from well-known originals – via translation or digestion – play out in the same way in Asia as they do in the West? Mizoguchi makes a magnificent test case, for as soon as the American censorship permitted, he resurrected several near-sacred Japanese texts and introduced them to the West. The film that first grabbed Bazin was the 1951 *The Life of Oharu*, whose Japanese title carries the name of the renowned seventeenth-century author that this film adapts: *Saikaku ichidai onna*. A few years later, Mizoguchi fastidiously brought to life a beloved puppet play by Japan's Shakespeare, again retaining the author's name in his title, *A Tale from Chikamatsu*. In between he rendered one of

Japan's most well-known tales, *Sansho Dayu*, relying on Mori Ogai's canonical 1917 version, but "improving" it, so he could be credited with bringing it to perfection.[43]

Perhaps because Mori Ogai had himself borrowed the tale from earlier versions,[44] Mizoguchi turned his adaptation into an explicit allegory of fidelity. In the story two kidnapped children, Anju and Zushio, are sold to a slave camp far from their parents. Throughout their long ordeal, Anju prays to an icon of a Bodhisvatta given to Zushio by their father. He had made his son touch the icon while faithfully repeating this maxim: "Be merciful to all men." Ultimately Zushio holds firm both to the spirit of the statue and to the letter of the maxim, just as Mizoguchi holds firm to the legend he adapted during the declining moral climate of post-Occupation Japan. Thus Mizoguchi made of *Sansho Dayu* an icon that honors another icon, the Goddess of Mercy lodged in the reliquary of the story.[45]

In 1991 Terrence Malick produced a stage version of "Sansho Dayu" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music; he also prepared an English-language film adaptation, still unproduced. Is Mizoguchi's "original" a sacred icon that Malick would revivify with a few deft strokes, the way Utamaro brought the Goddess of Mercy to life? Has he planned to reproduce it reverentially while attaching his name to its credits, as Gus Van Sant did with his 1998 remake of *Psycho*? Or does this famous American auteur aim to extend the reach of a legend already a millennium old, sending it beyond the horizon to Western audiences in a new idiom? The difference lies between fidelity (the vertical) and application (the horizontal). Today, in a remote site in western Japan stand statues of Anju and Zushio, awaiting tourists who take their tales or their cinema seriously. Traditional hotels advertise their proximity to this pilgrimage site. Commercial spinoffs succeed only by maintaining a link to something rooted deep.

And so the industry of adaptation operates within a two-dimensional cultural economy.[46] The vertical axis is governed by past and future, measured by distance from the ancestors and the

gods from whom literary, religious, and moral values derive; the horizontal axis multiplies wealth by spreading the value of this patrimony across contemporary terrain, reaching new populations. Trafficking in a vocabulary of credits and value, adaptation opens itself to an economic analysis, including the original theological understanding of economy. Since 2006, readers of *Cahiers du cinéma* have been introduced to this perspective through the articles of Marie-José Mondzain, an art historian who has turned her expertise in iconophilia and iconophobia directly to understanding films and television today.[47] But it is her earlier work that speaks so suggestively to questions of adaptation, especially her brilliant book that carries as its title *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary*.[48]

Cinema's early dominance by the West stems from Christian civilization's rapport with capitalism, to be sure, but also from its particular affinity for images, an affinity deriving from the structure of Trinitarian dogma. Ultimately founding an Ecclesiastical financial system that traffics in icons, the primary Christian "economy" pertains to the Trinity. The Fathers of the early Church employed this term to characterize a Unitary God split between the Father and the Son, His natural image,[49] and related by the Holy Spirit. This Trinitarian "mystery" amounts to an originary Difference within the Same, generating interminable discussion among philosophers and theologians, believers and unbelievers. Beyond debate, however, is the fertility of this dogma, which founds a series of binary unities such as thought and word, image and object, and – ultimately – being and meaning.

A second economy maintains the circuit of exchange between Heaven and Earth at work through Christ. Old Testament prophecies, angelic appearances, and prefigurations led to the New Testament accounts of the words and deeds of Jesus on Earth, in Judea. Two of those accounts (credited to Matthew and Mark) detail a privileged moment, "the Transfiguration," that visibly joined Heaven and Earth in vertical relation when Christ on Mount Tabor radiated a heavenly light. Particularly crucial to the Eastern Church, the Transfiguration guarantees the value of icons that are

themselves auratic images bathed in and radiating light to those who venerate them.

Icons are special tokens in the currency of a third theological economy, wherein the faithful buy into transcendence through a commerce of grace regulated by the Church. Icons, based on similitude, can be copied, and their multiplication after the fifth century alarmed the Church, which lost the ability to police their use, and feared a dispersal of authority. Man-made, they nonetheless partake in a value system guaranteed by Christ, the "natural image," when faithfully produced by an artisan of faith. Fidelity guarantees that the supernatural value invested in the prototype passes into the calc. Even copies of copies carry spiritual power to those who venerate them.

Mondzain's book concludes by demonstrating the persistence of an economy of images in modernity. Her privileged example is the same one Bazin mentions in the "Ontology" essay, the photograph of the Holy Shroud of Turin. On May 29, 1898, an amateur photographer named Secondo Pia was authorized to remove a protective transparent pane and take a 20-minute exposure of the shroud. Mondzain cites the newspaper report: "He dipped his glass plates in the developing bath; suddenly the negative in front of the red lamp caused the face of Christ, which no one had contemplated for eighteen centuries, to loom before his eyes."[50] Bringing together science and faith, negativity and appearance, as well as icon and index, the photograph of the shroud is as important as the relic itself. Through photographic duplication, the faithful could now keep personal copies of the official "original" so as to be in touch with Christ – literally in touch with Him through a series of physical relays. From the pocket photograph to the negative that produced it, to the 1898 photograph that came from the glass plates that had been affected in negative by light reflecting or emanating from the cloth, to the resurrected body that for three days was in contact with this cloth sufficient to leave a blurred and bloody but indelible impression. So goes the vertical economy of fidelity, where a miserable-looking photograph showing scarcely decipherable blotches can be venerated. But outside

this economy, whether for the nonbeliever – or for the believer once carbon-dating had proven it bogus – the shroud is nothing but an old rag.

When Bazin inserted this very picture as the first illustration in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* it accompanied his footnote: "Here one should really examine the psychology of relics and souvenirs which enjoy the advantages of a transfer of reality stemming from the 'mummy-complex.' Let us merely note in passing that the Holy Shroud of Turin combines the features alike of relic and photograph." And so a fetish (the photograph) of a literal fetish (the shroud), serves as a kind of blessing for Bazin's four-volume project. But it's a mixed blessing, so to speak, for by 1958 everyone knew the shroud to be fake and the photograph only a document of a hoax, or at least of a wild superstition. What could Bazin have had in mind in suggesting or permitting such an image to color our reading?

A paragraph mid-way through that essay suggests one motivation through a play on the word fidelity: "A very faithful drawing may actually tell us more about the model but despite the promptings of our critical intelligence it will never have the irrational power of the photograph to bear away our faith."[51] Why wouldn't a "faithful" drawing of the dead Christ not match this impoverished photograph in its psychological power? By now, we know the answer: Bazin argues that the iconic properties by which a photograph imitates the visual layout of its referent are far less compelling than the photograph's physical relation to the referent, its status as decal. In this case, the photograph is a decal of a putative decal of Christ, for the shroud served as a contact print of Christ's body. The photograph of the shroud is revered for being just two contact prints away from the God-man, the source of salvation. "Faith" in Christ motivates faith in this photographic image despite its evident inferiority to "faithful" drawings or paintings that deliver an illusion of presence. The impurity of the texture of this photographic image, on the other hand, ratifies the eerie presence of the absence of the object to which it is connected, no matter how weakly. All photographs gain from the genuineness

signaled by the impurities on their surface, for these indicate that the true subject has withdrawn from the sign. Bazin may lead to Derrida and Deleuze, with their proliferation of "difference," but here he leads to Mondzain and particularly to Jean-Luc Nancy who writes not of difference but of partial "similitude" that leads beyond appearance to a truth that is present in its absence from the image.[52] Bazin too suggests that adaptations, like images, can point to truths beyond their appearance.

Indeed, certain film adaptations have been taken as icons of canonical literary creations. With Literature replacing Religion as a source of transcendence in secular society, scholars are today's priests of inherited spiritual wealth. The fight between horizontal proliferation (of, say, Shakespeare or Jane Austen), and academic or artistic vertical authority plays out today in arguments over cultural studies. Bazin was interested in both economies; as his great essay "Pour un cinéma impur" demonstrates, he saw them as strictly interrelated, with popular adaptations profiting from the "value" of originals, but enriching the prowess and prestige of cinema through a kind of fidelity.

His key example of this concludes on the bare cross that is the final shot of *Diary of a Country Priest*. Bazin reminds us that what is present is nothing more than the shadow of a cross ("as awkwardly drawn as on an average holy card") cast upon the wall above the priest's corpse by two mullions. This ultimate "assumption" of the image, this spiritual abstraction, has been prepared over the course of two hours through the overlaying of the priest's voice, his inscriptions in his diary, and the black and white traces of human beings and objects, until at last we reach "a sublime achievement of pure cinema. Just as the blank page of Mallarmé and the silence of Rimbaud is language at the highest state, the screen, free of images and handed back to literature, is the triumph of cinematographic realism."[53]

Bresson's great film taught Bazin that filmmakers could challenge themselves with uncinematic literary material and produce "impure cinema" of the highest cultural order. Dispensing with the "illusory fidelity" of the replica, they had learned through

script construction and mise en scène to encounter a novel or a play and produce something close to the equilibrium of form and ideas that operates in the original. Never slavish or mechanical in rendering the original, Bresson achieved "an almost dizzying fidelity by means of a ceaselessly creative respect for his source." Genuine fidelity, then, needs creativity as well as good will, like the "true realism" of the "Ontology" essay, with which Bazin had challenged the surface realism of appearance. Just as true realism gets to the essence of its subject through the self-alienating operations of allusion and ellipsis, so genuine fidelity abandons obvious matching for creative respect. The encounter of languages around the case of a powerful text may reveal something new about the original while expanding the two languages involved. This is how the limited perspective and inevitable shortcomings of any filmed adaptation can still alter cinema's identity – and perhaps its ontology. The historical encounter with literature, as with any strong subject matter, helps cinema become what it is groping to be.

Toward the end of his life, Paul Ricoeur, Bazin's colleague at *Esprit*, came up with a magnificent philosophical study whose title serves my thesis: *Oneself as Another*. Cinema, like "the oneself" of personal identity, will never be fixed; yet neither is it a phantom. It depends on encounters with "another" (what is outside it). Even though your body has not a single cell that constituted "you" 30 years ago, and even though your circumstances, beliefs, and friends may have changed, you can "attest" to your actions and stand behind your promises; you can narrate your evolution. Identity accumulates; more than a chronological list of encounters, it is rather a narrative of discoveries, followed by promises (even if sometimes broken) and attitudes (even if sometimes evanescent). Just so, the cinema goes forward encountering traces of a larger world; and it goes forward as a memory machine adjusting "itself" to what it has become in this process of discovery and engagement with another subject, whether person, culture, temporality.

Ricoeur's title, it turns out, comes straight from Bernanos' country priest, who wrote in his diary, "Grace means forgetting oneself."[54] Adapting that maxim, let me conclude: cinema,

essentially nothing in itself, is all about adaptation, all about what it has been led to become and may, in the years to come, still become. Those of us who care enough to take on Bazin's charge must be vigilant in our quest for cinema, for it appears in ever new guises, changing only in itself.

Notes

1. Often thought to have been shot during a firefight, much of the dramatic footage of The *Battle of San Pietro* turns out to have been restaged, including the "involuntary" jerking of the camera. Still, Huston produced the experience of instantaneous action and risk. See Peter Maslowski, *Armed with Cameras* (New York: Free Press, 1993).
2. Even in Hollywood, the 1948 Paramount Case had dealt a blow to the studios, freeing talent, encouraging independent producers, and opening the US market to foreign films.
3. Eric Rohmer, "The Classical Age of Cinema," in *The Taste for Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 34–7.
4. André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 72.
5. Debord had gotten his start with *The Lettrists*. See Jennifer Stob, "With and Against Cinema: The Situationist International and the Cinematic Image." Ph.D. dissertation (Yale, 2010).
6. Marc Cerisuelo, in *Trafic*, 50 (Summer 2004), traces the genealogy of this expression and discusses Bazin particularly on pages 270–3. Bazin himself explicitly countered G. Altman (see Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 55) and he would surely have objected to the title I have ironically given this book, as if we could know once and for all "what cinema is."
7. André Bazin, "Agnès et Roberto," in *Cahiers du cinéma*, 50 (August 1955).
8. Varda was grateful for Bazin's support and dedicated one of her shorts, *Du Côté de la côte* (1958), to him.
9. This mode of exploration as self-critique had been pioneered by Michel Leiris in *L'Afrique fantôme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1934), a fundamental text for Rouch.

10. In the 1950s, Bazin reviewed Rouch's *Les Maîtres fous*, Resnais' *Night and Fog*, Jean Painlevé's shorts on insects, and Pierre Braunberger's *The Bullfight* (*La Course de taureaux*, 1951). In writing of this latter, he brought up the disturbing case of newsreels of wartime atrocities and actual deaths. Here cinema reached its limit – the limit, that is, of human experience, since death amounts to "subject matter" that, properly speaking, lies just beyond the subject's experience. Even the avant-garde finds the road barred here. See "Death Every Afternoon," in Ivone Margulies (ed.), *Rites of Realism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).
11. Jacques Rivette, "Letter on Rossellini," in Jim Hillier (ed.), Cahiers du cinéma, *vol. 1, 1950s: Neorealism, Hollywood, New Wave* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 192–3.
12. Antoine de Baecque, *Cinéphilie: invention d'un regard, histoire d'une culture, 1944–1968* (Paris: Fayard, 2003). See especially the section "La bataille du moderne," pp. 311–21.
13. A careful definitional and historical examination of these terms came out after I drafted this section. The reader is referred to András Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950–1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), esp. chs 1 and 2.
14. Annette Michelson, review of *What is Cinema?*, *Artforum*, 6(10) (1968), pp. 68–72.
15. Noël Carroll, *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).
16. Cited by François Dosse, *Paul Ricoeur: les sens d'une vie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1997), 270. Also see Dudley Andrew, "Tracing Ricoeur," *Diacritics*, 30(2) (2000), pp. 43–69.
17. Their dialogue began after Malraux' *Espoir* was screened in 1945.
18. As Bernanos' literary executor, Béguin had awarded the project to adapt *Le Journal d'un curé de campagne* to Bresson after the author had turned down Pierre Bost's proposal. Bazin alludes to this in his caustic final sentence to his review of the Bresson film. See Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 143.
19. Aaron Gerow, A Page of Madness, *Cinema and Modernity in 1920s Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 2008).
20. Eric Rohmer, "The Classical Age of Film," in *The Taste for Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 34.
21. Eric Rohmer, "The Classical Age of Film," in *The Taste for Beauty*, p. 42. Originally published in *Combat*, June 15, 1949.

22. Rohmer, "The Romance is Gone," in *The Taste for Beauty*, p. 39.
23. Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 130. Hugh Gray, Bazin's translator, singles out this sentence on page 7 of his introduction.
24. Ibid., p. 131.
25. Bazin's contribution to *Sept Ans du cinéma français* took up that tiresome and discredited amalgam, "Filmed Theater." Intent to find genuine cinema operating even here, he judged Cocteau's *Les Parents terribles* a pure adaptation because it was undertaken by the author himself. Rather than rework the play's subject in a new medium, Cocteau took the play itself as his subject, filming it as a witness might.
26. André Bazin, "Position critique: Défense de l'adaptation," *La Revue des lettres modernes*, 36–8 (Summer 1958), p. 195.
27. I list other examples in Dudley Andrew, "Old as New," an introduction to *Breathless: Jean-Luc Godard, director* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988).
28. Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 40.
29. Hervé Joubert-Laurencin has latched onto this enigmatic phrase in Bazin's original version of the "Ontology" essay, which he modified for the 1958 collection.
30. André Bazin, "The Death of Humphrey Bogart," Jim Hillier (ed.), Cahiers du cinéma, *vol. 1, 1950s*, pp. 98–101; originally published in *Cahiers du cinéma*, February 1957.
31. See Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, "Bazin contre la politique des auteurs. Pour contribuer à une archéologie de l'anti-bazinisme des *Cahiers du cinéma*," lecture given in Paris, December 7, 2007.
32. René Clair, "On Credits," in *Cinema Yesterday and Today* (New York: Dover, 1972), pp. 231–4.
33. In two essays called "Le Travail du film" (*Enclitic*, Spring 1978 and *Camera Obscura*, Spring 1980), Thierry Kuntzel brilliantly explained how the first images and sequences of *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931) and *The Most Dangerous Game* (1932), respectively, are the core fantasies that the rest of these films unravel through the logic of the plot.
34. J. D. Connor, "The Persistence of Fidelity: Adaptation Theory Today," *M/C Journal*, 10(2) (2007).
35. I discuss the coincidental historical drama that made this 1934 version politically charged in "Economies of Adaptation," in Colin MacCabe, ed., *The Virtues of Fidelity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

36. Claude-Edmonde Magny, *The Age of the American Novel: The Film Aesthetic of Fiction between the Two Wars*, trans. Eleanor Hochman (New York: Ungar, 1972). Henri Focillon's *Vie des formes* came out in 1934, just when Magny was beginning to formulate her thesis. While Bazin was far more explicitly indebted to Malraux' work in art history, he often spoke of "forms" in a way that seems to go straight to Focillon. Sally Shafto adds Focillon to the list of key names governing modern film aesthetics in "Leap into the Void: *Godard* and the Painter," *Senses of Cinema* (online), originally published in French in *CinémaAction*, 109 (2003).
37. André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Montreal: Caboose, 2009), p. 131. I use the Barnard version because it is far closer to the original, proving the point of the citation.
38. Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, trans. Barnard, pp. 124–5.
39. Lawrence Venuti, "Adaptation, Translation, Critique," *Journal of Visual Culture*, 6(1) (2007), pp. 25–43.
40. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schoken Books, 1968).
41. See my "Malraux, Bazin, and the Gesture of Picasso" in Dudley Andrew (ed.), *Opening Bazin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
42. André Bazin, "Le film d'art: est-t-il un documentaire comme les autres?" *Radio-cinéma-télévision*, 75 (June 24, 1951).
43. I elaborate this point in Dudley Andrew and Carole Cavanaugh, *Sansho Dayu* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), pp. 49–50.
44. For the distinction between "borrowing" and adapting, see my "The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory," in Syndy M. Conger and Janice Welsch (eds.), *Narrative Strategies in Film and Prose Fiction* (Macomb: Western Illinois University Press, 1980); reprinted in Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), and in James Naremore, *Film Adaptation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).
45. Should we care that Mizoguchi was seen praying to a Buddhist figure in his Venice hotel room the night before being awarded the Silver Lion for *Ugetsu*?
46. Jim Collins argues that the high-concept adaptation has become the calling card of Global Hollywood. See his analysis of *The English Patient* (1996), *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), and other literary blockbusters in *Bring on the Books for Everybody: How Literary Culture*

Became Popular Culture (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

47. Marie-José Mondzain, "Can Images Kill?, *Critical Inquiry*, 36(1) (2009).
48. Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). This book is cited by Jean-Michel Frodon, *Horizon cinéma* (Paris: *Cahiers du cinéma*, 2006), p. 30.
49. Marie-José Mondzain, *L'Image naturelle* (Paris: Nouveau Commerce, 1995).
50. Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy*, p. 197.
51. André Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What is Cinema?* p. 14. Bazin's famous phrase in the "Ontology" essay is as follows: "Le dessin le plus fidèle peut nous donner plus de renseignements sur le modèle, il ne possèdera jamais, en dépit de notre esprit critique, le pouvoir irrationnel qui emporte notre croyance." This is translated by Barnard on p. 8 as "The most faithful drawing can give us more information about the model, but it will never, no matter what our critical faculties tell us, possess the irrational power of photography, in which we believe without reservation." See also Philip Rosen, "On Belief in Bazin," in Andrew (ed.), *Opening Bazin.*
52. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Ground of the Image* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), esp. ch. 3, "Forbidden Representation."
53. Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 141.
54. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 24.

INDEX

4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days (*4 luni, 3 săptămâni şi 2 zile*) 53–6
The 400 Blows (*Les Quatre cents coups*) xix–xx, xxiii, 17, 19, 23, 98

A Propos de Nice 41
absence/presence 9, 12–18, 25, 34, 37, 41, 70, 48, 123–4, 138–9
actors and acting xix, xxi, 5–7, 15, 22, 37, 51, 67, 99, 101, 118–19, 122, 124, 128–9
adaptation xxvi, 32, 112–19, 122–3, 126–36, 139–41, 143n, 144n
  fidelity 114, 126–40
Agostini, Philippe 35
Altman, Georges 105, 141n
ambiguity xx, xxv, 23, 42, 55
Amélie (*Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*) xxiv, 5, 18–24, 48–50, 54, 56–7, 77
American Beauty 77
Andersson, Harriet xxi
animation xvi, xxiv, 1–4, 6–7, 29–30, 42, 59–60
Annaud, Jean-Jacques 17, 88–9
Antonioni, Michelangelo 78, 121
apparatus xiv, xxvi, 8, 22, 32, 68, 79–81, 87, 95n
Assayas, Olivier 5, 52
Astruc, Alexandre 47, 93, 100–2, 104
L'Atalante 100
Au Hasard Balthasar 45
Aumont, Jacques xix, 86, 109
Aurenche, Jean 118, 127
auteur policy 5, 43, 54, 68, 92, 101, 107, 119–23, 135
avant-garde xvi, 47, 98–102, 105–6, 109–10, 142n
  "pure cinema" 30–1, 70, 82, 84, 96n, 100, 104, 114–19, 143n
  see also "impure cinema"

Balzac, Honoré de 116, 118, 130
Barnard, Timothy 27n, 33, 61n, 62n, 144n, 145n
Barthes, Roland 12, 26n, 109
Bataille, Georges 14–15
The Battle of Midway 99
The Battle of San Pietro 99

Bazin, André xiii, xvi, 1, 16, 105
on adaptation 113, 129–33, 140
Bazinism 6–7, 41
and Bresson 44, 100, 103, 114, 116, 139
and *Cahiers* xxi, 4, 92, 104–5, 108–9, 117, 120, 123, 133
on editing/*découpage* 32–3, 36–7, 43–4
evolution of cinema xxvi, 33, 98, 108–12, 129
on filters 40–1, 45, 69–70, 83, 123
and Godard xxi, 4, 33, 37, 44, 101, 120–1
on modern/avant-garde 99–101, 105–7
"Ontology" essay 4, 8–16, 26n, 29, 31, 41–2, 110–13, 126, 131, 137–40, 145n
Qu'est-ce que le cinéma? xxv, 84, 98, 105, 109–12, 138
and Renoir 7–8, 21–2, 42, 66, 83, 99, 103, 107, 110, 122
and Rohmer 4, 9, 92, 101–2, 111
and Rossellini 10, 38–40, 43–4, 64n, 98–9, 101, 103, 105–7, 110, 121–3
and Truffaut xix–xxi, 14, 17, 44, 101, 117–19, 121–2
Béguin, Albert 114, 142n
Bellour, Raymond 86
Benjamin, Walter 14, 27n, 113, 133
Bergman, Ingrid xxi, 10, 44, 64n, 78, 121, 139, 140 142n
Bergson, Henri xiv, 34, 80
Bernanos, Georges 45, 119–20, 123, 131, 140, 142n
Biarritz festival 72, 100–2, 107
The Big Blue (*Le Grand Bleu*) 17
Blow Up 78–9
Bogart, Humphrey 121, 123–4
Bost, Pierre 118, 120, 127, 142n
Brakhage, Stan 2, 110
Breathless (*A bout de souffle*) xxi, 98
Brecht, Bertolt 109
Bresson, Robert 43–5, 100, 103–5, 108, 114, 116–20, 123, 131, 139–40, 142n
see also Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne; *Diary of a Country Priest*
Breton, André 14, 85
Buñuel, Luis 95n, 100, 102, 122

Cahiers du Cinéma xxi–xxii, xxiv, 4–5, 16, 23, 52, 54, 57, 59–61, 88, 92, 104, 105, 108–9, 114–20, 123, 133, 136
"*Cahiers* line" 4, 8, 17, 42–8, 92
caméra-stylo 47, 93, 100, 107, 109, 120
Cannes festival 39, 52, 100–1
Capra, Frank 33
Carroll, Noël 110
Cassavetes, John 124
censorship 31, 71 122, 134
Chaplin, Charles xvi, 122
Chen, Kaige 57
"Cinéma du Look" 5, 17, 24
Cinema of Attractions xiv, 15, 87, 97n
"Cinema of Quality" 105–6, 118–20
cinématographe xiv, 32, 80–1, 87–8, 95n
Citizen Kane 11, 99–100
Clair, René 23, 124
classic cinema (includes classic Hollywood cinema) xv–xvi, xxi, 5, 7, 38–9, 43, 50, 56, 66–7, 76, 82, 98–9, 102–3, 105, 107, 110
Clément, René 39
Cleo from 5 to 7 (*Cleo de 5 à 7*) 47
Cocteau, Jean 44, 92, 100–1, 103–4, 119, 127, 143n
computers 3, 5–6, 50–1, 67–8, 74, 86–7, 94, 96n
contingency *see* happenstance

Coutard, Raoul 19
credits 22, 35, 43, 49, 85, 122–6, 135–6
Cubitt, Sean xviii, 3, 52

Dalí, Salvador 14, 85, 102
Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne 100, 116–17
Daney, Serge 1, 4–5, 8–9, 16–18, 24, 28n, 42, 45–6, 88–9, 92, 98
De Baecque, Antoine 28n, 108–9
Debord, Guy 105, 141n
Debray, Régis 67–8
découpage 32–4, 38–40, 51, 62n, 66
Delannoy, Jean 118
Deleuze, Gilles xiii–xiv, 8, 66, 77–8, 80–2, 84, 99–100, 139
Deren, Maya 104
Derrida, Jacques 15, 93, 139
De Sica, Vittorio 40–1, 54
Desplechin, Arnaud 5, 52, 55n
Diary of a Country Priest (*Le Journal d'un curé de campagne*) 44–5, 114, 119–20, 123, 130–1, 139–40
digital xiv, xvii–xviii, xxv–xxvi, 3–6, 19, 25n, 42, 51–2, 57, 59–60, 66–8, 80–1
  see also computers
document 3, 14–16, 37, 42, 48, 74, 138
documentary xvi, xxiv, 3, 15–16, 30, 33, 36–9, 42, 48, 63n, 99, 107, 114, 120–1, 133
Dogme 95 5
Doniol-Valcroze, Jacques 104, 118
Dos Passos, John 36, 110
The Double Life of Veronique (*Le Double Vie de Véronique/ Podwójne życie Weroniki*) 77
Duchamp, Marcel 85–6, 100, 102
Duras, Marguerite 17, 47–8, 89, 93

early cinema xv, 1, 97n
  see also Cinema of Attractions
Écriture 93, 116, 119
Eisenstein, Sergei 30, 32, 35, 45, 108, 110
Ellipsis 13, 17, 34–41, 43–5, 54–5, 63n, 140
Elsaesser, Thomas 3
Epstein, Jean 92, 100
Espoir 31, 39, 99–100
event 13, 16, 26n, 32, 35–6, 38–9, 41–3, 46, 54–5, 64n, 74, 82, 100
evolution 31, 33, 67, 81, 98, 100, 108–9, 130, 140

Faulkner, William 12, 110
Faure, Élie 37
fidelity *see* adaptation
figure 10, 18, 24, 46–7, 90, 92, 134
Flaherty, Robert xviii, 35, 66
The Flowers of St. Francis (*Francesco, Giullare di Dio*) 43
Focillon, Henri 130, 144n
Ford, John 99, 108
frame and framing xx, xxiii, 6, 15, 18–19, 21, 24, 32, 52, 77–86, 90–1, 96n
Freud, Sigmund 125
Frodon, Jean-Michel 4, 53, 61

Gangs of New York 51
Geuens, Jean-Pierre 5, 51
Gillain, Anne 23
Godard, Jean-Luc xxi, 4, 19, 24, 28n, 33, 37, 44–5, 63n, 68, 74, 81, 92–3, 98, 101, 109–10, 120–1
Great Expectations 131
Greenaway, Peter 86
Grizzly Man 4

happenstance 19, 39, 41, 56, 69, 84, 121, 125
Hiroshima Mon Amour 45, 47–8, 93, 98, 109

Hitchcock, Alfred 122
home movies 3
Hugo, Victor 128–9
Huston, John 99, 104, 123, 141n

icon 28n, 61n, 134–9
  see also sacred
"impure cinema" xxvi, 30–1, 79, 93–4, 110–12, 113–14, 117, 119, 131, 138–9
In the Mood for Love 90
In the Realm of the Senses 89–90
index and indexicality *see* trace
Internet *see* computers

Japanese cinema 103, 114, 133–5
La Jetée 76
Jeunet, Jean-Pierre xxiv, 19–20, 22–4, 28n, 49, 54, 77
  see also Amélie
Jia, Zhang-ke 5, 52, 57–60, 67
  see also Still Life; *The World*
Joyce, James 7, 110
Jules and Jim (*Jules et Jim*) 18–20, 24, 92

Kapo 24
Keathley, Christian 19, 28n
Kiarostami, Abbas 17, 52
Kuhn, Annette 5

Lang, Fritz 108, 143n
Last Year at Marienbad (*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*) 90, 93, 109
Lastra, James 24
Léaud, Jean-Pierre xix–xxii, xxiv
Leenhardt, Roger 31, 34–7, 40–1, 52, 55, 115
Letter from an Unknown Woman 88–9
Lettrists 102, 104, 141n
liberation 38, 43, 100, 113
literature 7, 92, 110, 115–20, 139–40
  see also adaptation
The Lover (*L'Amant*) 17–19, 88–9
Lumière Brothers xiv, 31, 80, 87, 95n

The Magnificent Ambersons 100–1, 116
Magny, Claude-Edmonde 37, 113, 130
Les Maîtres fous 70–5, 121–2
Malick, Terrence 135
Mallarmé, Stéphane 112, 139
Malraux, André xiv, 14, 19, 31–3, 36–9, 40–2, 55, 63n, 87, 99, 108, 130, 142n, 144n
  Espoir 39, 63n, 99, 142n
  Man's Fate (*La Condition humaine*) 31–3, 36
  "Sketch for a Psychology of Cinema" xiv, 14, 31–3, 87
Manovich, Lev xviii, 83, 96n
Man Ray 2, 100, 102
Marker, Chris 47, 64n, 74, 76, 92–3, 95n
Masina, Giulietta xxi
metaphor 35, 37, 40, 46, 91, 120
  see also figure
Michelson, Annette 110
Le Million 23
Les Misérables (various versions) 128–9
Mizoguchi, Kenji 133–5, 144n
modern cinema 11, 17, 38, 44, 47, 60, 66–7, 76, 78, 87, 92, 96n, 98–9, 102–3, 107–10, 112, 120, 122, 131, 144n
modernity (includes modernism) xix, 14, 36–7, 61n, 67, 85, 103, 105, 107–10, 112, 134, 137
Moi un noir 121

Mondzain, Marie-José 16, 27n, 136–7, 139
montage 15, 32–4, 45, 48–9, 62n, 81, 85
Moreau, Jeanne 19–20
Morin, Edgar xiii, xiv, xviii, 29, 30, 61n
Mungiu, Cristian 53–6
see also 4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days
museum 2, 74, 78, 86, 102, 105, 124, 133
myth 113, 128–9

Nancy, Jean-Luc 139
Nanook of the North xviii–xix
narration 49, 54, 56, 58, 93, 121, 140
neorealism 17, 40, 64n, 99, 104–7, 110, 113, 121, 123, 133
new media *see* computers
New Wave xvi, xix, xxii–xxiv, 5, 17–19, 24, 28n, 98, 105–6
Night and Fog (*Nuit et brouillard*) 45–8, 93
The Nights of Cabiria (*Le Notti di Cabiria*) xxi

Objectif 48–49 see Biarritz festival
Once Upon a Time, Cinema (*Nassereddin Shah, Actor-e Cinema*) 80, 84
ontogeny 110-13, 131

A Page of Madness 115
Païni, Dominique 109
Painlevé, Jean xvi, 142n
Paisà 39, 43, 101
Paris 1900 xvi, 33
Photography 8, 29, 35, 37, 38, 61n, 67, 78–9
see also Bazin, "Ontology" essay
Play Time 23
plot (includes story) xx, 10, 22–3, 32, 43–4, 50, 54, 59, 76–7, 91, 117, 125, 127, 129, 131, 135

La Pointe Courte 106–7
postmodern cinema 67, 86, 143n
presence *see* absence/presence
The Promise (China) 57–8

Racine, Jean 103, 117
Radiguet, Raymond 118, 127
randomness *see* happenstance
Ray, Nicholas 120, 123
real time 51–9, 87
realism (cinematic) xx, xxv, 5, 8–10, 36–41, 43, 56, 83, 110–17, 130–1, 138–41
reality 2–4, 6, 8, 13, 18–24, 30–3, 38, 40–1, 43–5, 51, 61, 69–70, 75–9, 80, 85, 93–4, 115, 130, 138
religion 61n, 71, 112, 133–4, 136, 139
see also sacred
Renoir, Jean 7–8, 21, 42, 66, 83, 92, 99, 103, 107, 110, 119, 122
see also Rules of the Game
Renoir, Pierre-Auguste 20–1, 77
Resistance, the 11, 38, 43, 99–100
Resnais, Alain 43, 45–6, 47, 48, 90, 92–3, 108–9, 142n
see also Hiroshima Mon Amour; *Last Year at Marienbad*; *Night and Fog*; *Toute la mémoire du monde*
Reynaud, Émile 1
Ricoeur, Paul 91–2, 112, 114, 140
Rivette, Jacques 4, 28n, 44, 64n, 78, 101, 107, 109
Robbe-Grillet, Alain 93, 130
Rohmer, Eric 4, 7–9, 24, 92, 95n, 101–2, 109, 111, 115–16
Romeo and Juliet (1968) 132–3
Rosen, Philip 3, 145n
Rossellini, Roberto 5, 10, 39, 40, 43–4, 64n, 78, 98, 103, 105–8, 110, 121–3
see also Paisà; *Stromboli*; *Voyage to Italy*

Rouch, Jean 35, 70–5, 95n, 107, 121–2, 142n
Rules of the Game (*La Règle du jeu*) 7–8, 22, 98–100

sacred 5, 71, 74–5, 90, 134–5
  see also religion
Sansho Dayu 135
Sartre, Jean-Paul 9, 11–15, 103–4, 120, 123
  L'imaginaire 12–13
Sanders, George 10, 44
Schwartz, Louis-Georges 15, 25n
screen 2–3, 8, 10, 14, 18–19, 25, 32, 34, 37, 38, 40–2, 54, 58–61, 68–70, 75, 77–81, 83–6, 116, 123–7, 139
  aesthetics and psychology of xxi, 15–16, 21, 26n, 41, 73–6, 80–5, 91–4
  etymology and definitions of 82–3, 87, 96n
  in the movie theater xvi, 6, 34, 66, 68, 74, 76, 87
  in museums and on stage 86, 96n
Sept Ans du cinéma français 104, 117, 143n
Shadows 124
Shakespeare, William 132, 134, 139
Stendhal 118, 120
Still Life (*Sanxia Haoren*) 57–9
Stroheim, Erich von 66, 110
Stromboli 121–2
Summer with Monika (*Sommaren med Monika*) xxi
surrealism 14–15, 19, 85–6, 95n, 104, 123
suture 82–4, 96n

Tati, Jacques 23, 119
Tautou, Audrey xxiv, 20
  see also Amélie
television xiv, 9, 16, 68, 78, 87–8, 94, 136
temporality 6, 15–17, 34–5, 37–8, 40, 46–7, 55, 60, 77, 87–8, 107, 122, 144n
Toute la mémoire du monde 93
trace 9, 11, 15, 22, 25, 37, 59, 69, 90, 93, 124, 139–40
Truffaut, François xix–xxi, xxiv, 4, 17–20, 22, 28n, 44, 92, 101, 109, 117–22
  "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" 117–22
  see also The 400 Blows; *Jules and Jim*

Umberto D. 41, 54
Utamaro and his Five Women 134–5

Varda, Agnès 24, 47, 105–7, 141n
  see also Cleo from 5 to 7; *La Pointe Courte*
Védrès, Nicole 33
Venuti, Lawrence 131–2
Vigo, Jean 41, 100
Voyage to Italy (*Viaggio in Italia*) 10, 44–7, 78, 106–7

Waking Life 6–7
Welles, Orson 42, 83, 99, 101, 103–4, 107, 116, 122
Western xvi, 108
Why We Fight 33
The World 59–60
World War II 15, 29, 38–9, 66, 78, 128–9

Zahedi, Caveh 6–7
Zhang, Yimou 57
Zielinski, Siegfried xiv–xv, xvii
Zola, Émile 118, 126